

EDITED BY JON WHITMAN

Romance and History

Imagining Time from the
Medieval to the Early Modern Period



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ROMANCE AND HISTORY

To what extent can imaginative events be situated in time and history? From the medieval to the early modern period, this question is intriguingly explored in the expansive literary genre of romance. This collective study, edited by Jon Whitman, is the first systematic investigation of that formative process during more than four hundred years. While concentrating on changing configurations of romance itself, the volume examines a number of important related reference points, from epic to chronicle to critical theory. Recalling but qualifying conventional approaches to the three “matters” of Rome, Britain, and France, the far-reaching inquiry engages major works in a variety of idioms, including Latin, French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish. With contributions from a range of internationally distinguished scholars, this unique volume offers a carefully coordinated framework for enriching not only the reading of romance, but also the understanding of changing attitudes toward the temporal process at large.

JON WHITMAN teaches in the Department of English of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where for many years he also directed the Center for Literary Studies. He has published a range of essays on approaches to romance and history, and he is the author of *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (1987) and the editor of *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (2000).

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*Imagining Time from the Medieval
to the Early Modern Period*

EDITED BY

JON WHITMAN



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*To my wife, Ahuva,
and
to my daughter, Naomi Eliora*

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Preface

In the coordination of a study about the interplay of texts and time, even the conventional turnabouts in the time shortly before publication – when what is nearly a postscript becomes finally a “preface” – may have a special point. For me, in any case, the time of completing this preface is an opportunity to express my appreciation to those who helped to turn the work that is about to be past into the book that is about to come.

The preparation of this study is the culmination of a collective research project extending over many years and including scholars from a range of countries. I began coordinating the project for the Center for Literary Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem when I was the director of the Center. The initial stages of the project included the shaping and organizing of a broad international conference in Jerusalem on “Romance: Dimensions of Time and Designs of History.” Much of the work for this volume appeared in an early form in selected material at that conference; other work was provided at later stages. Close and detailed consultation with each of the contributors facilitated extensive cross-references between parts of the study and the gradual adaptation of essays for the cooperative volume as a whole.

To the Center for Literary Studies I am deeply grateful for its indispensable support – institutional, financial, and practical – for this wide-ranging international project. Supplementary assistance was provided by the Authority for Research and Development and the Faculty of Humanities of the Hebrew University.

For the valuable contributions made to the collective project by all the participants in the formative conference in Jerusalem I wish to express my sincere appreciation. In addition to almost all the individuals contributing to this specific volume, those who gave presentations or chaired conference sessions included Cyril Aslanov, Haggai Ben-Shammai, Lawrence Besserman, Sanford Budick, Carol J. Chase, Luisa Ferretti Cuomo, Jeannine Horowitz, Joshua Levinson, Sylvie Meyer, Lee Patterson, Claudia Rosenzweig, David Wallace, and Eli Yassif. Both before and after the conference,

Ruben Borg, Jennie Feldman, and Jonathan Stavsky offered careful translations into English for three non-English contributions to the collective project. Student assistants of the Center for Literary Studies provided practical help with various aspects of the conference.

For his encouragement for this conference and, more broadly, for his far-reaching vision of international dialogue in Israel at the highest levels of contemporary literary scholarship, I am especially grateful to the founding director of the Center, Sanford Budick.

The transformation of individual essays into the components of a collective study was made possible by the sustained commitment of the contributors to this volume. I am indebted to them for their rich scholarship, their exemplary patience, and their gracious cooperation in the complex and intricate process of preparing this book. The texture of the study is a testimony to their cooperative spirit.

As the text approaches publication, it is especially saddening for me to record the loss of one of the contributors to the volume, Marco Praloran, who passed away at the age of fifty-six. Both at the conference in Jerusalem and in his essay for the collaborative study he made distinguished contributions to the research project as a whole. I remain grateful for his sincere dedication and his intellectual enrichment of our shared activity.

In arrangements for the publication of this work I am particularly indebted to Alastair Minnis for his attentive care and encouraging support. I would like to express my appreciation to Linda Bree at Cambridge University Press for her thoughtfulness and expert assistance, and to the readers for the Press for their comments on a preliminary form of the study. The talent and craftsmanship of Nahman L'hrar made possible the artwork for the book jacket.

Beyond my gratitude for assistance with this particular project is an abiding personal indebtedness for support of a deeper kind. Though the lives of my parents did not extend to the time of my present writing, my very sense of how a past can inform a future remains indebted to their enduring guidance and continuing inspiration. To my wife, Ahuva, and to my daughter, Naomi Eliora, I am indebted anew with every new moment. In a fundamental sense, their sustained and loving support during the years in which this work was in the making is the real preface to this book. I cannot adequately express how grateful I am to them for their keen understanding, their special generosity, and their steadfast care over those years. But in dedicating this book with love to Ahuva and Naomi Eliora, I hope at least to be able to suggest from the beginning that without them I could scarcely have imagined that time.

JON WHITMAN
Jerusalem, Israel

Opening perspectives

CHAPTER I

Romance and history: designing the times

Jon Whitman

Romance *in medias res*

Shortly before the middle of the past century, one of the most distinguished literary historians of the modern period sought to trace the “representation of reality” [*Wirklichkeit*] in Western literature. To exemplify the perspectives of medieval romance, he chose a twelfth-century French narrative by the founder of Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes.¹ His discussion of Chrétien’s *Yvain* opened with an account of a retrospective passage near the beginning of the poem, in which a knight tells members of the Arthurian court about an adventure he had some seven years beforehand. After riding through a forest, the knight recalls to his listeners, he had eventually reached an exotic spring and poured water from it onto a special stone. A torrential downpour suddenly followed; the defender of the spring soon appeared and vanquished the knight; the discomfited adventurer later made his way back to the Arthurian court. Closing his long-untold tale, the knight admits to his audience that he felt like a “fool” then and considers himself a “fool” now for relating the story.²

For Erich Auerbach, offering in *Mimesis* a mid-twentieth-century retrospective on romance, the circumstances of this tale exposed a broad tendency to escape from the very “reality” that he sought to find represented in literary form. In his account a conspicuous aspect of that tendency was the treatment of history and time in the romance. Though some seven years had elapsed since the knight told his tale, when one of the listening knights subsequently (and more successfully) replayed the adventure, it seemed as if temporality had been suspended in the interim. In Auerbach’s words, “Nothing has changed; the seven years have passed without leaving a trace, just as time usually does in a fairy tale.” While Auerbach granted that courtly romance included “colorful and vivid pictures of contemporary reality,” he argued that such literature lacked the “politico-historical context” of the *chanson de geste*.³ The view was

conventional at the time he was writing. By the middle of the twentieth century, the notion that chivalric romances were elaborate ways of eliding the temporal world was itself already *in medias res*, and the notion had been developing for far more than seven years.

In a sense it had been developing for more than seven hundred years. Even a glance back at only a few of its diverse expressions displays chronic anxieties about the treatment of history and time in romance – from the invention of events to the inversion of chronology. In the eighteenth century, a translator of an influential treatise on romances articulates its caution about “Histories stuffed with Falsities” that underlie a multitude of such stories.⁴ In the sixteenth century, a critic of an expansive romance complains that it moves “backward” and “forward” in temporal orientation, “without paying any attention to the continuation of time” [*senza avere alcun riguardo alla continuazione del tempo*].⁵ In the fourteenth century, a learned poet slights those who elaborately compose “dreams” of “errant” knights [*erranti*], yearned for by an “errant” populace [*vulgo errante*].⁶ And as for encountering an exotic spring with water that can provoke a rainfall, in the twelfth century (shortly before the composition of *Yvain*) a more exacting adventurer, the historian Wace – determined as he is to distinguish fact from “fables” – seeks the spring and reports that he failed to find anything of the sort. A “fool I went there,” he remarks in retrospect; “a fool I returned from there.”⁷

If only he could have known how the future would change his past. By the middle of the thirteenth century, that rain-provoking spring – having been treated not just in the poetry of Chrétien de Troyes but also in scholarly discussions of the natural order – comes to be regarded not as mere matter for romance, but as one of the divinely created wonders of the phenomenal world.⁸ That transformation suggests how the very concept of what is historically authentic can change with the changing categories of human minds. To recognize this process it is not necessary to be an avid partisan of postmodern theory. The issue is already raised in premodern practice. In the case of romance, that practice involves more than the general principle that the act of shaping history is constantly subject to modulating beliefs and allegiances. The case of romance involves a special kind of self-consciousness.

For since the origins of medieval romance in the twelfth century, its development has recurrently provoked questions about which texts composed *en romanz* belong to a specific genre, and which episodes of those texts exhibit or elude history. Even when the questions are not systematically expressed, they are frequently implied, as in the early use of the term

romance (and its cognates) for divergent forms of writing, or in the intriguing arrangement of various texts in early manuscripts. It is often noted, for example, that the scribe of a thirteenth-century manuscript directly inserts Chrétien's five Arthurian romances (with slight alterations) in the midst of a "history" of early Britain by Wace himself, a history that in the manuscript is itself the codicological (and chronological) sequel to the "romances" of *Troie* and *Eneas*.⁹ But the phenomenon passes beyond this codex. In a late thirteenth-century manuscript of Jehan de Malkaraume's versified *Bible*, most of the *Roman de Troie* is inserted after the account of the death of Moses, along with the comment that the crossing of the Red Sea was contemporary with the destruction of Troy.¹⁰ In still another manuscript, the *Quest of the Holy Grail* is included with detailed annals of the Church to 1281.¹¹ More broadly, by the end of the Middle Ages, variegated elements of romance – from brief Arthurian episodes and allusions to extensive tales about figures as diverse as Havelok the Dane and Richard Coeur de Lion – are repeatedly incorporated in historical chronicles.¹²

This is not to say that those who configure such texts do not distinguish between romance and history. It is rather to stress that their designs suggest some of the complexities of clarifying the relation between the two realms, especially at a time when history itself is coming to be composed in the vernacular – *en romanz*. As romance develops into a leading narrative form in the Middle Ages and passes into the early modern period, it becomes a critical literary site in which questions about the historical status of imaginative events are negotiated.

Nothing more conspicuously exposes the historical conditions of such negotiations than the celebrated early classification of narrative by the French writer Jehan Bodel in a *chanson de geste* dating from about the late twelfth century.¹³ In distinguishing "three matters" [*trois materes*] – the matter of "France," the matter of "Britain," and the matter of "Rome" *la grant* – Jehan divides the narrative world not only according to space, but also, as it were, according to time and function. He observes that the matter of Rome (which evokes the world of antiquity) is edifying [*sage et de sens aprenant*]. But he pointedly specifies that the matter of France (which evokes the Carolingian world to which he himself turns in his *chanson de geste*) is not only true [*voir*], but also evident every day [*chascun jour aparant*]. As for the matter of Britain (which evokes the Arthurian world), it is emptily entertaining [*vain et plaisant*] – with *vain* perhaps suggesting that the legendary milieu of ancient Britain is an illusion.¹⁴

For Jehan Bodel in his *chanson de geste*, the dismissal of the romance of "British" antiquity is a correlate of the French politics of his own day.

Whether or not for him the contemporary extension of “Rome” is the Holy Roman Empire,¹⁵ his classification of the places and times of narrative is virtually a narrative of his own times and places. Not the least irony of his narrative of history is the future of the “matter of France” and its alignment with “truth” in later critical theory. Following the transformation of that matter in the late medieval and early modern periods, the altered “matter of France” becomes a recurrent reference point for the first systematic theories of the non-historicity and fantasy of romance in sixteenth-century Italian discussions of the *romanzo*.

Jehan’s distinction nonetheless has a far-reaching afterlife. For generations it remains the locus classicus for critical divisions of medieval narrative into antique, Arthurian, and Carolingian subject matter, although even medieval romance (to say nothing of narrative at large) is broader in scope. (The examples of Havelok and Richard Coeur de Lion noted above are only two cases in point.¹⁶) More specifically, the distinction between escapist romance and engaged *chansons de geste* continues to influence scholarship to this day. In some respects it underlies Auerbach’s mid-twentieth-century argument that courtly romance lacks the “politico-historical context” of the *chanson de geste*.¹⁷ Various aspects of that argument still have considerable force, and in many romances such a context is not apparent. But in the decades since *Mimesis*, its general stance concerning the “representation of reality” in romance has been, if I may use the expression, saturated by a virtual downpour of studies about the historical and temporal features of the genre.

A number of important studies of the subject have been provided over the years by contributors to this volume, and an overview of their new contributions in this collective study appears later in this chapter. But even aside from their critical research – and even if an account were limited to book-length works alone – it would be possible here only to note some of the significant investigations of recent years.

Among them are works of wide-ranging scope, beginning a decade after *Mimesis* with Erich Köhler’s *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik* (1956),¹⁸ and developing expansively (at times in the form of collected essays from extended periods) by the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century: for example, Dominique Boutet, *Charlemagne et Arthur, ou le roi imaginaire* (1992);¹⁹ Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *De l’histoire de Troie au livre du Graal: Le temps, le récit (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)* (1994);²⁰ Fritz Peter Knapp, *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik* (two volumes, 1997 and 2005);²¹ the collection coordinated by Jean-Claude Faucon in *Temps et histoire dans le roman arthurien* (1999);²² and

D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (2002).²³

Yet even these far-reaching volumes only suggest the extent of recent attention to the historical and temporal dimensions of romance. Already before the 1990s the subject is diversely treated in books by R. Howard Bloch, Susan Crane, Georges Duby, Anthime Fourrier, Stephen Knight, Richard Lock, Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, Cesar Segre, Philippe Walter, and others. Since the 1990s the pace has accelerated. Some studies, such as books by Frank Brandsma, Mark Chinca, Francis Ingledew, Lee Patterson, Matteo Residori, and Bart Van Es, have examined aspects of the question while focusing on individual works or authors from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. Other volumes, such as studies or collections by Laura Ashe, Martin Aurell, Horst Brunner, James P. Carley, Patricia Clare Ingham, Richard J. Moll, Michael Murrin, Helen J. Nicholson, Klaus Ridder, Gabrielle M. Spiegel, Richard Trachsler, and Michelle R. Warren, have explored changing approaches to the topic over broad periods. These and a host of other important works, including formative essays – many of them indicated in the chapters of this volume – have increasingly exposed the interplay of romance, history, and time.

Such research has discerned in romance more than timeless realms of exotic fantasy. It has shown, for example, how already in the formative period of the twelfth century, stories of enterprising knights wandering from a court are evoking tensions in the contemporary social world, from relations between orders of the nobility and the monarchy to the conditions of personal mobility. It has aligned the uses of genealogy in thirteenth-century romance plots with aristocratic concerns to ensure legitimacy by tracing continuous lines of descent over time. It has linked the emergence of prose romance during this period with an effort to authenticate the very idiom of discourse. It has examined the functions of local and pragmatic concerns in some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century romances, and in quite different narratives of the fourteenth century it has probed the complex interaction between individual decisions and communal destinies. It has investigated the influence of patronage and nationality on the historical and narrative designs of romances in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And it has explored how the temporal maneuvers of romance – from beginning *in medias res* to “interlacing” the time lines of diverse plots – can alter the assessment of temporal experience.

Yet, for all the richness of such research, it remains difficult to develop composite views of the interaction between romance and history. During the centuries in which it flourishes, romance undergoes radical shifts in

orientation, and scholarship on the subject registers the strain. Systematic analyses of approaches to romance and history in particular texts are dispersed in a multitude of scholarly settings. Even the broadest studies of the topic tend to concentrate on limited periods (such as the early generations of romance), or to investigate specific matters (such as Arthurian romance), or to offer disparate essays about variegated developments. With regard to the rare and valuable volumes that include sustained analyses of romances from both the medieval and the early modern periods, to my knowledge none focuses on relations between romance and history.

Given such a vast and protean subject, any single book about it must be radically selective in scope. But with inquiries *in medias res*, sometimes even a partial and provisional framework can open new opportunities for comparative analysis. This cooperative study aims to offer a framework of that kind. It is designed not to survey the genre, which includes a variety of texts in which temporal reference points are remote, but to investigate collectively a range of major works – including some of the central works of romance – in which such reference points are indispensable. Though the volume devotes attention to a number of issues related to the medieval and early modern genre, from the orientation of epic to the disposition of chronicles to the development of critical theory, it focuses on changing configurations of romance itself. The question with which it is principally engaged is not whether texts of this kind “are” or “are not” historical in complexion. The question is what aspects of history – and, more deeply, what kinds of history – such texts evoke.

Matters of romance, modes of history

It should be stressed that in any response to that question the categories of analysis are themselves implicated in the temporal process that they aim to describe. In writing about approaches to history, there is no *hors-histoire*. By the same token, past categories, even when qualified by later events, have a continuing conceptual interest for the present. The diverse “matters” of Jehan Bodel exemplify the point. However partisan his classification, the “three matters” display over time distinct generic tendencies and different historical trajectories that need to be considered in any assessment of changing narrative approaches to temporal experience. The format of this volume reflects a concern to take such categories into account while engaging in a contemporary critical dialogue with them. The overviews below draw upon the essays specifically contributed to this collective effort.

The matter of Rome (and realms to the east): approaches to antiquity

There is more than divisiveness underlying that programmatic division of early narrative into the matters of France, Britain, and Rome. While the formulation reflects an acute historical rivalry between France and Britain, it also evokes the shared sense of a broad formative past, the foundational milieu of Roman antiquity. Whatever the limitations of such a notion, it is Rome “*la grant*” – all the more so if its scope is extended to include the remote conquests of *Alexandre le Grand* – that provides the matrix for some of the initiating works of medieval romance itself. The poetic narratives that emerge *en romanz* in the twelfth century on Thebes, Aeneas, Troy, and Alexander are primal moments in both the history of romance and the romance of history. How is that shared ancient history framed in such texts?

It is customary to treat the twelfth-century romances of antiquity as sustained exercises in historical transmission – exhibiting the transfer of empire (*translatio imperii*) from the ancient past to the medieval present by the very act of translating antique learning (*translatio studii*) into a contemporary idiom. Yet the historical progressions portrayed in these works are fraught with unsettling disjunctions of desire, lineage, and order. In [Chapter 2](#) of this volume, Christopher Baswell explores some of the ways in which the romances of antiquity both evoke such transgressive drives and seek to contain them. His analysis suggests how the carefully crafted forms repeatedly depicted in these narratives – massive walls and elaborate tombs and decorated fabrics – call attention to temporal disorder while seeming to suspend it through their craftsmanship. In this sense, such forms are virtually imaginative codes inside the romances for the artful codex that contains the *roman antique* itself. But there are twelfth-century accounts of the ancient past that engage the anxieties of history with a more open-ended sense of art. The point is exemplified in the treatment of the wide-ranging Alexander, whose pressing concerns – from doubts about his own paternity to struggles with powerful adversaries – do not wholly suppress his capacity for resourceful ingenuity, even a kind of exuberance. No less than Troy or Rome, Alexander’s empire is finally subject to dissolution. But already in its emergent forms, medieval romance is exploring alternative ways of turning historical disintegration into new artistic designs.

If ancient history cannot be wholly contained, can it at least be clarified? In the thirteenth century that aim seems increasingly attainable as history comes to be written in vernacular prose, a way of writing frequently

regarded as closer than poetry to the direct presentation of events. In [Chapter 3](#) of this volume, Catherine Croizy-Naquet compares two accounts of ancient history in thirteenth-century prose, one focusing on - Caesar and Rome (the *Faits des Romains*), the other focusing on the civilization of Troy (the *Roman de Troie en prose*, an adaptation of the *roman antique* in verse). The authors of both works seek to give their texts historical authenticity – invoking authoritative sources, situating events in temporal order, associating individuals with significant lineages. But they differ substantially in their ways of conceiving history and their styles of communicating it. The *Faits*, which compares Caesar to the contemporary French king and variously aligns the Roman figure with Aeneas, Alexander the Great, and Troy, is from one perspective the more “politically” oriented work. Yet it is the author of the *Faits* who conspicuously deploys “literary” techniques to fashion his history – for example, presenting a warrior fighting for a collective cause as a knight drawn from epic or portraying Cleopatra as a beauty adapted from romance. By contrast, the author of the prose *Troie* recurrently reduces the imaginative flights of his romance source, treating them as an extravagance at odds with authentic history and with his didactic message of a Troy doomed by its passions. In effect, these two works – one of which tends to “romancify” history, the other of which aims to “historicize” romance – suggest some of the deep ambiguities involved in the very definitions of such categories. What is at stake in such ambiguities is finally the question of how to elucidate primal events in the movement of a civilization.

The matter of Britain: social and spiritual drives

“Empty entertaining” – thus Jehan Bodel at about the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries dismisses the matter of Britain. But what he regards as British fluff becomes for others the stuff of history. In England the historical construct of an Arthurian era comes to be inseparable from an emerging sense of national identity. From the early twelfth century, when Geoffrey of Monmouth composes his formative *History of the Kings of Britain*, to the late Middle Ages, when vernacular versions of that history (especially in the Prose *Brut*) are diffused at a breathtaking pace, the precedent of Arthurian civilization increasingly informs the highest circles of the English social order, from “Round Table” tournaments to the imperial ambitions of contemporary kings. On the European continent, where the treatment of Arthur is less national in orientation, the Arthurian age at large nonetheless comes to be correlated with a providential design

in Christian sacred history itself. A relic from the Last Supper – the Holy Grail – passes from the time of Jesus to the time of Arthur and transfigures Camelot. In the historicizing narrative of the expansive thirteenth-century *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*, the preeminent knight of the Grail is a descendant of King David himself. Yet if in some respects the matter of Britain comes to be regarded as more than empty entertainment, in other respects its authenticity is questioned from the start. Chivalric adventures in wondrous landscapes, grisly struggles with fearsome giants, erotic encounters with diabolical enchantresses: such phenomena seem conspicuously remote from the norms of temporal experience. Could romance of this kind intersect with history, and, if so, what might be the patterns of their intersecting lines?

It seems that the initial site for such intersections is already provided by Geoffrey's foundational history itself. It is not just that his work is a "romanticized" history, in the sense that (even more adroitly than many medieval histories) it presents fictional accounts as facts. The point is rather that critical features of his text that do reflect aspects of history – the sociopolitical history of the twelfth-century aristocratic world – offer intriguing openings for the genre that is about to emerge. Among these reflections of the twelfth-century milieu, as Robert W. Hanning points out in [Chapter 4](#), are the important roles given in Geoffrey's narrative to young armed men on the make (*juvenes*), the highly stylized civilization of the Arthurian court, the suggestive interplay in that civilization between knightly prowess and responsive love, and the indispensable ingenuity of a clever "cleric" like Merlin. Already in the later twelfth-century work of the first writer of Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes, such features are transformed into versatile new narrative configurations, centered on aspiring knights who join the celebrated court of the king, consolidate its military and political affairs, enter into the passionate throes of love, and draw upon ingenious stratagems to shape their own destinies. Yet romanticized history of this kind does not always end happily ever after. By the early thirteenth century, the *Mort Artu* is exposing in the Lancelot–Guinevere affair some of the deadly predicaments involved in the conflicted politics of prowess and love and ingenuity. If the individuated world of Arthurian romance seems remote from conventional histories of kings and wars, that is not just because it sometimes entertains flights of fantasy. It is also because it gives expression to the psychological attractions and public dilemmas of a socially restless world in the making.

At times the making of the medieval world takes a more programmatic form in such writing. In [Chapter 5](#) of this volume Adrian Stevens explores

the potential political implications of two of the most important versions of the matter of Britain in early thirteenth-century Germany, the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg and the Grail romance *Parzival* (a work composed before the *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*) of Wolfram von Eschenbach. In terms of imperial agendas, Gottfried may associate Tristan with a sense of historical transition from the ancient *imperium* of Rome to the Angevin and (German-inflected) Holy Roman empires of the medieval present. At a time when the contemporary Angevins are politically supporting a German ruler whose ancestry overlaps with their own, their shared chivalric ancestor Tristan virtually embodies the transformation of civilization. It is a transformation not only from the outside, as Tristan slays the domineering Morolt and thereby frees an inchoate Britain from Roman control, but also from the inside, as together with Isolde he finds refuge in a marvelous cave and ushers in an order of transcendent love. In *Parzival* the imaginative/historical transfiguration is still more ambitious. According to Wolfram's account, the early Angevin dynasty, including Parzival and his half-brother, the baptized infidel Feirefiz, intersects with the exalted Grail dynasty itself. Parzival and Feirefiz in turn have children who are ancestors of Christian-affiliated kingdoms to the east – the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and the wondrous Orient of Prester John. Suggesting an era when the Holy Roman Emperor traces his own lineage through the Angevins to the Crusader kings, Wolfram's poem envisages a wide-ranging empire in which the Christian West coalesces with a converted East.

Yet even beyond such geopolitical agendas the development of Grail romance at large implies far-reaching conceptions of history as a whole. In [Chapter 6](#) of this volume Friedrich Wolfzettel examines some of these provocative conceptions in French treatments of the Grail, from the formative vision of Robert de Boron at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the vast, fourteenth-century romance of *Perceforest*. Already in the fragmentary surviving work of Robert de Boron there is an intensely eschatological drive in the story of the Grail, projecting the historic movement of a redemptive, Christological object to the Arthurian world. This providential movement is assured not by the apostolic succession of the normative Church but by the genealogical line of an aristocracy of Grail guardians. The sense of a sacral dimension in the knightly order is elaborately developed in the opening work of the early thirteenth-century *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*. Yet the very utopian drive that in this view shapes the historical process finally tends to foreshorten it, and the culminating figure in the Grail genealogy of the *Cycle* – Galahad – embodies a kind of

historical dead end. After an ecstatic personal vision he dies; the Grail is taken up into heaven; the Arthurian kingdom on earth disintegrates. Long after the early vogue of Grail romance and the messianic dream of a spiritually redeemed chivalry, the romance of *Perceforest* offers an expansive alternative to the early alternative histories of the Grail. It subordinates the Grail story to the history of a pre-Arthurian Britain, a primal age that exhibits its own forms of religious enlightenment even while it prefigures the Christian order of the Arthurian era. With its imaginative exploration of an antique civilization, perhaps the romance itself prefigures the humanist perspectives of the early modern period.

In medieval Britain itself the end of early British history is rarely associated with the story of the Holy Grail. For most English writers the principal source (direct or indirect) for authoritative accounts of early Britain is the Grail-less *historia* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and even writers of English romance scarcely engage the Grail story until the close of the Middle Ages. How is the denouement of the matter of Britain conceived in different forms of narrative in late medieval England? In [Chapter 7](#), Edward Donald Kennedy investigates approaches to the end of the Arthurian kingdom in three diverse contexts: (1) the Prose *Brut* chronicle, emerging in the late thirteenth century – and situating Geoffrey's history within the continuum of British and English history at large; (2) the verse chronicle of John Hardyng, writing after the middle of the fifteenth century; and (3) a poetic work (composed between these two periods) that has long eluded generic classification, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Both the *Brut* and Hardyng's chronicle tend (with variations in focus) to treat Arthur as a noble king overcome by forces beyond his control. Though English chronicles regularly aim to distinguish history from stories associated with romance, Hardyng's late verse composition, which alludes even to the story of the Grail, suggests how that distinction is sometimes blurred. Yet both conceptually and generically, perhaps the most provocative intersection between history and romance in late medieval English verse is the Alliterative *Morte*. While it is now common to associate schematic dichotomies between good and evil with romance, it seems that such dichotomies apply more to the chronicle versions of Arthur than to the alliterative poem. The *Morte* presents the King as an acutely ambivalent figure, capable of destroying a giant but also of murdering children, subject to forces not only outside him, but also within his soul. In its complex approaches to morality and causality, this "romance" finally suggests something of the unsettling density of history.

Hundreds of years after the Arthurian realm of the historical chronicle emerges from Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Arthurian realm of chivalric romance develops from Chrétien de Troyes, chronicle and romance in the matter of Britain decisively converge in the expansive late fifteenth-century Arthuriad of Thomas Malory. As Helen Cooper indicates in [Chapter 8](#), Malory's momentous work is both a culminating act and a founding event – promoting the turn to prose in English-language fiction and anticipating the “writing of England” in the early modern period. Composed in the tumultuous period of the Wars of the Roses, the *Morte Darthur* can often be read as a commentary on the contemporary crisis of political authority. Yet its historical allusiveness is subtler in its operation than the referential program of a roman à clef. In depicting the bewildering slippage of the Arthurian realm, Malory conspicuously complicates the causalities – incest, adultery, rival loyalties – frequently invoked in earlier romance. He presents a world in which a king's very appeal to the rule of law involves fatal contradictions, conflicts susceptible to no *deus ex machina*. Exposing the tensions not only between legal principle and power, but also between judicial process and right, Malory evokes historical dilemmas that pass far beyond the local politics of his fifteenth-century milieu. He explores the ethical and social entanglements involved in the making and unmaking of a nation.

The matters of France and Italy: acts of recollection and invention

The matter of France is “true,” insists Jehan Bodel at about the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. No doubt he would have been dismayed to learn of the radical metamorphosis of that matter after his time, especially in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Italy. From Franco-Italian works such as *L'Entrée d'Espagne* to the *ottava rima* poems of Boiardo and Ariosto, tales of Charlemagne and his paladins acquire expansive new forms – finally including a multitude of exotic characters (ranging from an enticing sorceress to a transporting hippogriff); a vast geographical scope (extending to the storied Far East); a reorientation toward chronological change (eventually displacing the sense of momentous crisis by momentary, often erotic, experience); and a conspicuously shifting agenda (from French destiny to Italian dynasty). The heroic Roland who in the *chanson de geste* of about 1100 loses his life for “sweet France” becomes by the early 1500s in *Orlando Furioso* the erratic lover who loses his wits for alluring Angelica and who (to add inventive insult to epic injury) has his wits retrieved on the moon by an Englishman. If the matters of France and

Italy have anything to do with history as they pass flamboyantly from the Middle Ages to the early modern period, that history must involve deeply changing approaches to temporality itself. How might such changes be characterized at different stages of their development?

For the early *chansons de geste*, the matter of France involves a foundational time in the historical consciousness of a community. In [Chapter 9](#) of this volume Jean-Pierre Martin treats the epic presentation of formative conditions in the Carolingian dynasty as a construct of collective memory – articulating a sense of communal identity in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France and reflecting the territorial, social, and spiritual drives of this later period. From such a perspective, the development of the *chansons de geste* is a large-scale counterpart to the genealogical quest for origins undertaken by aristocratic families in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even as specific *chansons* display contemporary political aims. Thus, for example, in depicting the ninth-century transfer of the crown from Charlemagne to his son Louis, the *Couronnement de Louis* gives that early event features (including the youth of the child) which suggest the later, twelfth-century ceremony of hereditary transfer from the Capetian king Louis VI to his young son. As a vision of shared history, the primal world of the *chansons de geste* is evoked in medieval chronicles that develop outside the poems as well as in “recollections” of characters inside the texts themselves. In this sense, interior retrospectives in the *chansons de geste* differ in character from the personal revelations of an unknown past in Arthurian romance. Yet as the stories of the *chansons de geste* expand in the later Middle Ages, they increasingly incorporate elements of magic and mystery in their own right, and they come to address audiences whose sense of collective history passes far beyond the Carolingian era. The matter of France opens into the matter of Italy, which itself eventually opens into the excursions of early European narrative prose.

It is often said that when the matter of France comes to be adapted in the early modern romances of Boiardo and Ariosto, the militant spirit of the *chansons de geste* converges with the amorous adventurousness of the Arthurian legend. But as Riccardo Brusagli indicates in [Chapter 10](#), this generic transformation reflects deep historical changes in Italy itself. Boiardo’s *Orlando Innamorato* is composed in the ambience of late fifteenth-century Ferrara, when the Este dynasty seeks to give Ferrara the status of a European power. Through a charismatic figure of chivalry – the warrior/lover Rug(g)iero, who is identified as both a descendant of Hector of Troy and an ancestor of the Estensi – Boiardo provides that

dynasty with its genealogical credentials. In this sense, the historic shift in Boiardo's unfinished poem is not just the *inamoramento* of Orlando, but the tendency for Orlando's unrequited passion to be superseded by the prospect of Ruggiero's foundational marriage. By the same token, in the vision of the poem the exemplary Arthurian age – which in its combination of war with love is privileged by Boiardo over the Carolingian age – is virtually reborn via the Estensi heirs of that marriage, almost as it is reborn via Arthur's successors in the imagination of early modern England. Yet dreams of destiny, including Italian destiny after the French invasion of 1494, have their deferrals. As Ariosto expansively elaborates Boiardo's poem in the early 1500s, he subjects the progress of Ruggiero to repeated complications and protracted delays. The entanglement of the plot is an expression of the engaging but trying complexities of the romance of history.

How do different ways of structuring a plot imply different approaches to the movement of time? In [Chapter 11](#) Marco Praloran explores that question with special attention to the history of narrative interlace (*entrelacement*) long after its early development in thirteenth-century Arthurian romance. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the technique of interweaving simultaneous adventures tends to be displaced or modified in romances in both England (such as the *Morte Darthur*) and Spain (such as *Tirant lo Blanch* and Montalvo's version of *Amadis de Gaula*). For all their differences in content and context, such romances display a shared interest in temporal continuities, such as the sequentiality of events and the progression of a protagonist. By contrast, in Italy the interlaced narratives of Boiardo and Ariosto repeatedly qualify this kind of movement with the presence of other story lines that may intersect with a given narrative at any moment. Such open-ended plots appear to be preeminently suited to the notion of limitless adventure and indefinite expansion in the world of the quest. But in radical forms such as the *Furioso* they can confuse the very sense of "earlier" and "later" and thereby disrupt the notions of conventional causality and objective temporality. If the dilations and fluctuations in narrative of this kind display a certain lyricism, they also betray a chronic instability. While modified versions of *entrelacement* inform the later work of Tasso, Spenser, and Cervantes, one of the central concerns of the emerging European novel is the effort to coordinate the development of meaning with the arrangement of timing. The history of *entrelacement* exposes not only diverse approaches to narrative technique, but also conflicting attitudes toward temporal experience.

Matters of fabulation and fact: shifting registers

Though questions about the divergence of romance from history are as old as romance itself, the questions acquire a new critical edge in the early modern period. A range of developments contribute to the critique. In literary theory, a new focus on Aristotle's *Poetics* helps to promote demands for "credibility" in imaginative plots. In historical research, a new scrutiny of disparate chronicles and textual records tends to demystify legendary pasts like the Arthurian era. In material conditions, changing ways of life – from the technologies of war to the transactions of commerce – serve to intensify the association between chivalric romance and remote fantasy. It would be possible to extend the list of factors. Yet even as the matters and modes of romance shift in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writers such as Tasso, Spenser, and Cervantes display intriguing ways of engaging the realm of fabling with the realm of fact. Exposing the liabilities of romance, they nonetheless make it inseparable from their diverse historical visions. In the post-medieval period there are multiple expressions of the desire to divide the romantic from the real. But long before romance is "retrieved" in the movement to the Romantic era, early modernity seems repeatedly to redeploy the genre to inform the very constructs of history.

The problem of genre is acutely posed in theory. Following the flamboyant manipulation of the matter of France in the romances of Boiardo and Ariosto, sixteenth-century Italian literary theorists repeatedly seek to distinguish the fictionality of the *romanzo* from the historicity of epic. Yet, as Daniel Javitch shows in [Chapter 12](#), the distinction is itself recurrently qualified by distinctions. It is argued, for example, that even Ariostan romance is based on historical events, or that the inventions of romance may be history-like ("verisimilar"), or, more radically, that canonical epics themselves include considerable inventions of their own. The drive to align poetry with history and to treat romance as a defective form of epic remains a major strain in both poetic theory and practice in late sixteenth-century Italy. Yet perhaps no one more conspicuously displays the complications in that drive than the critic-poet Torquato Tasso, whose effort to correlate heroic poetry with the historical process includes the provision that marvels are allowable if they derive from supernatural causes and that digressions are permissible if they contribute to the overall aim of the poem. For all Tasso's stress on the authority and credibility of history, in his approach the temporary diversions of romance seem almost to display the texture of temporality itself.

A detailed analysis of Tasso's theory and practice displays some of the historical stakes involved in such controversies. In [Chapter 13](#), David Quint indicates that, for Tasso, romance is historically unsettling not just

because it can drift into fantasy, but also because it can disrupt the potential for form itself. A diffusive presentation of copious incidents – whether marvelous or mundane – implies a disquieting shapelessness in history. Yet Tasso considers poetic invention itself to be a means of molding the matter of history into intelligible form. The tension in his argument is exemplified in his romance-inflected epic of the First Crusade, *Jerusalem Delivered*, in which a standard romance motif like the magical transport by a sorceress (Armida) of a warrior (Rinaldo) to an erotic retreat (the Fortunate Isles) is juxtaposed with journeys more providential in character (like the sailing of Columbus to the New World). With resonances of this kind, the eventual rescue of Rinaldo and his recommitment to the Crusade read almost like a return from the extravagance of romance to the epic of history. But by the end of the poem, Armida rejoins Rinaldo, too, and Tasso leaves unclear the eventual outcome of that rendezvous. Scarcely does *Jerusalem Delivered* appear, in fact, before a different author imagines a sequel to the story. It seems that the very effort to close a history is chronically subject to the contingencies of romance.

There is a still deeper sense in which early modern distinctions between epic history and romance fantasy seem constantly to be overtaken by events. In the late sixteenth century, when the English poet Edmund Spenser turns the inventions of the Italian *romanzo* into new matter for the matter of Britain, he transforms in his *Faerie Queene* the very frameworks of conventional history. To some extent this is a function of his blending of allegory with epic, but more broadly it is virtually an extension of the momentum of romance itself. As Gordon Teskey observes in [Chapter 14](#), Spenser is repeatedly thinking in and through his subject matter, treating the remains of the past as material for remaking in the poetic present. Writing at a time of immense historical pressures in his own country, he gives expression to the dream of a grand dynastic progression to a glorious destiny. But he is acutely conscious of the ruins of time and the problems of redeeming it. Wandering amid such ruins, his romance is not just a rumination about history, but an evocation of how the mind itself brings the past into play. At the same time, it is an exposé of the difficulty of stabilizing temporal experience and the moral dilemmas of trying to shape history from the inside.

From such perspectives, the interplay of history and romance suggests more than the overlap of genres. It suggests the overlap of past and present time periods as individuals and communities seek to negotiate their own identities. The process is exemplified in two generically ambiguous texts that probe the foundations of Spanish identity and that nearly frame in their times of composition the florescence of indigenous Spanish romance.

One of these texts is the early fifteenth-century *Chronicle of King Rodrigo with the Destruction of Spain*; the other is the allusive “Captive’s Tale” of Cervantes, a narrative that the author inserts inside the larger narrative of his early seventeenth-century *Don Quixote*. Both of these texts, suggests Marina S. Brownlee in [Chapter 15](#), are composite forms of historical discourse and romantic invention; both evoke hybrid forms of ethnic and religious affiliation in Spain in diverse periods; and in each text such hybridity is virtually embodied in the figure of an enigmatic woman unsettlingly placed between conflicting worlds. In the *Chronicle* the woman is La Cava, a legendary figure (possibly drawn from history) whose ravishment by a Christian ruler is frequently implicated with the conquest of Christian Spain by the Moors in the formative era of the eighth century. In Cervantes’s “Tale” the woman is Zoraida, a Moorish woman (possibly suggestive of the historical Zohara of mixed ancestry) who seeks to become Christian and who in her journey from Algiers to Spain passes through a site named for La Cava. In their ambivalent assessments of these two women and the men who desire them, these texts seem to exhibit more than the divided impulses of characters in early and late Spain. Exposing personal and social tensions that pass beyond literary convention, they seem to express something of the multifaceted character of history itself.

Romancing the future²⁴

For well over four hundred years, from the middle of the twelfth century to the early seventeenth, the composition of romance in its various forms is one of the dominant movements in European narrative. If this study helps to clarify some of the changing relations between romance and history, it should be stressed that the volume is not designed conversely to be a history of romance. It concentrates on the kinds of romance – especially chivalric romance – that first emerge *en romanz* in medieval Europe and that give the genre its name. It would require an extensive set of volumes to provide a systematic account of attitudes toward history in “romance” at large, as the term has come to be applied to narratives in antiquity, to poems in the Romantic period, or to modes of the imagination.

Even with regard to the medieval and early modern periods alone, a much more expansive study than this one would be needed to offer a comprehensive inquiry into approaches to romance and history. A project of that kind would examine, for example, temporal perspectives in the kinds of “pastoral romance” that begin to flourish in Europe at large in the early modern period. It would investigate types of medieval romance, as in

Anglo-Norman and Middle English writing, that engage topical, popular, and social material quite different from the visionary “matters” of Rome, Britain, and France.²⁵ It would analyze other important works in the linguistic contexts considered in this volume – Latin, French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish – while passing beyond those contexts to romance as it is shaped in other idioms, from Dutch and Portuguese to Hebrew and Yiddish. And it would extend the investigation of the historical dimensions of the genre, from the contemporary crises and counter-histories evoked in Grail romance,²⁶ to the reception history of manuscripts and motifs, to the manipulation of chronological structure in narrative. This specific volume on romance and history is designed to be not a conclusion but a beginning.

But in the study of romance, as in romance itself, beginnings may have unexpected sequels at virtually any time or place. In another setting I have argued that what Auerbach took to be the elision of time at the opening of *Yvain* is part of a careful reordering of temporal sequence, whereby the retrospective story of a lapsed period some seven years earlier is later countered by the forward activity of a knight who redoes the story, dynamically transforming the kind of archaizing impulse that is associated with romance into a movement toward reform.²⁷ But there are times when romance suggests still more intriguing approaches to the “representation of reality.”

Many years ago – more than “seven” – I sought out in contemporary France the very spring to which Chrétien de Troyes and Wace referred in the medieval past. Though the forest in which the spring was said to be located was a long distance away, the transportation at my disposal was not a charger but a car. After an extended drive, my wife and daughter accompanied me as we initially walked into the forest. But the weather that afternoon was hot and sultry, and they decided to return to the car while I continued the search. At last I found the spring, and I even poured water from it over a number of stones. Nothing happened. But maybe I should mention that somewhat later, what began as a light shower of rain rapidly turned that evening into a lightning-streaked, crashing, torrential downpour. My daughter called it a “delayed reaction.” In any case, it seems that romance has a way of taking its time. So do studies of romance. In more senses than one, this volume itself might be considered a kind of delayed reaction to a movement that began long ago. The fascination of that movement is that even though it once seemed to be forever relegated to the past, it yet has an uncanny way of opening into the future.

II

*The matter of Rome (and realms to the east):
approaches to antiquity*

*Fearful histories: the past contained
in the romances of antiquity*

Christopher Baswell

After his astonishing sequence of conquests – so great that vernacular romance versions of his life scarcely exceed the typically more sober reports of historians – Alexander the Great encounters an enemy he can (perhaps) contain, but cannot overcome. As narrated in the late twelfth-century *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, this is a group of violent peoples, quasi-human, quasi-monstrous, who occupy vague territories in the far north and west of Alexander's ambit, far from the eastern realms that witnessed his earlier triumphs. Their capital is at Taragonce (Taracun), where they are led by Gog and Magog, who descend from Nimrod of Babylon. They have not just this genealogical link to Alexander through the city of his greatest triumph (and the city at which he will die), though. Their militant skills also mirror those of Alexander's own people; they are fine metal workers with excellent armor, fierce and brave fighters on fine swift horses, and they possess a prince. They have impenetrable walls and defensive machines that repel Alexander's attacks. But these are fearful adversaries, whose point of access to the rest of Alexander's lands lies at the Caspian Gates; if they escape, Alexander warns his barons, the world of his conquests is ruined. Many of them live off human flesh, and decimate Alexander's soldiers by devouring their living bodies, blood, and brains. Already at the limit of the human in their cannibalism, these peoples further collapse all familial relation in an unrestrained practice of incest.

In this final detail, since he is persistently uncertain of the identity of his own father, Alexander meets his monstrous double in the peoples of Taragonce. These northern races, in their simultaneous extremity and similarity, suggest what Alexander and his people could become – their semi-human twins. The peoples of Taragonce incorporate and monstrously exaggerate some of the extreme or corrupt behaviors encountered, in brief flashes, in Alexander himself throughout his story, though often in sibling text traditions like Walter of Châtillon's Latin *Alexandreis*: murderousness, gluttony, sexual excess. Both militarily and thematically, then,

they cannot be completely eliminated – their extremity at once defines and endangers the very humanity of Alexander and his people.¹ Yet, like so many limit cases here and in other romances of antiquity, the peoples around Gog and Magog must be somehow contained. Advised by a divine revelation, Alexander shuts in the peoples of Taragonce: “*E enclost e enserra vint e deus regions*” (6525); he encloses twenty and two peoples, through an immense building project, walling off the Caspian Gates with huge metal columns and barred gates hardened with bitumen (a substance that will appear again, below). “By that great craft he has blocked them up / So neither they nor their race might ever again escape.”² There they remain, until they will be loosed by the arrival of the Antichrist. They are thus walled in, contained almost, but explicitly not quite, forever. But – and this is symptomatic of the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* – Alexander doesn’t get them all. In a brief episode that immediately follows, Alexander also wants to enclose the similarly threatening people called “Griffeins,” but, for all his efforts, he cannot, and he leaves this last monstrous isle uncontained.³

This episode, I will claim, exemplifies attitudes toward history and temporality, widespread in the romances of antiquity though especially dense in the Alexander romances. These texts are threatened both from the past and from the future, by dangers of excessive but cognate peoples, dangers of uncontrolled or transgressive eroticism, dangers of uncertain or unknowable lineage. This essay will explore a sequence of responses by which the romances of antiquity at once register and try to contain (to varying extents) these reminders of and fearful alternatives to their own histories, their own versions of humanity. Their most persistent gestures of containment, I will show, are versions of architecture, as seen just above. At the same time, some of these texts, particularly the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, encounter but divert their historical terrors in more flexible, even playful fashions, in overt gestures of artifice and quasi-theatrical performance that evoke their very occasions of textual creation and reception.

We are accustomed to thinking of the romances of antiquity, and the attitudes they display especially toward the Trojan, Macedonian, and Roman pasts, in a largely positive light. After all, in the context of their twelfth-century origin and their thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts and redactions, these are works of renewal and transmission. They restore versions of Greco-Latin antiquity to a vernacular-speaking aristocratic public. Especially in the case of the *Roman d’Eneas*, they offer glorious prehistories for the imperial ambitions of audiences like the

Anglo-Angevins around Henry II; and that prehistory is all the more telling because these medieval rulers lay a vague claim to genealogical links with the Romans and their Trojan founders.⁴ Alexander's Macedonia is drawn into some of the same issues by that nation's own claim to Trojan ancestry. If Troy fell as a result of civic pride and sexual transgression in the *Roman de Troie*, it was succeeded (in the *Roman d'Eneas*, actually composed somewhat earlier) by the empire founded by Eneas in what he claimed was his own genealogically legitimate return to Latium – his ancient mother – and an exogamous marriage there, to Lavinia, sponsored by the local ruler, her father, Latinus. This is indeed an optimistic reading of the *Eneas*, and equally of the promises inherent in the *Roman de Troie*, even if it largely leaves aside the earliest and darkest of the usual grouping of the romances of antiquity, the *Roman de Thèbes*. Equally, these positive reactions to the romances of antiquity, often guided by the (medievally valid) optics of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, tend to ignore the tremendous tonal variability within and between the various Alexander romances, and their common narrative of the swift posthumous fragmentation of his empire. In a number of publications I have participated in such optimistic readings of these texts, and what they offered readers in the twelfth century and after.⁵ Later studies in this volume discuss the recurrent interest in genealogy and *translatio imperii* in narratives beyond the romances of antiquity, composed in settings ranging from medieval Germany to early modern Italy and England (Chapters 5, 10, and 14).

What I hope to explore in this chapter is a more complex and certainly a more anxious sense of history that already pervades the romances of antiquity and some of their sources and related texts, especially in the vernacular Alexander tradition. I want to consider several manifestations of a fear of history itself and the fragility of its institutions, densely linked to fears about lineage and even erotic terror, which together generate a strong if paradoxical thread in the romances. The first element in this persistent fear of history is a widespread anxiety about the apocalyptic implications of foundations and endings, be they civic, national, or dynastic. It is virtually a motif of these stories that origin also involves some activity that could threaten the structures of whatever institution is thereby begun. Rome is founded out of Helen's rape and the resulting civic cataclysm of Troy; Alexander's father may be the triumphant Philip of Macedon, or Alexander may be the illegitimate son of an exiled Egyptian king and an adulterous mother. Endings are equally unnerving, for instance the civic end of Troy or the mortal end of Alexander: both model imperial temporality and dispersal in ways that unnerved their heirs or imitators from Rome onward.

A primary way that these works negotiate with and contain their fears about history, I want to suggest, is by gestures of enclosure and containment, hence the double sense of my subtitle, *The Past Contained* in the Romances of Antiquity. These texts are thick with moments at which objects of artifice simultaneously arrest temporality itself, yet often record events from that very temporality. And the most prevalent mode of such containment by artifice across all these works is architectural, be it in the form of walls (as already exemplified by Alexander at Taragonce), cities, tombs, or altars. While such efforts at the artisanal suspension of temporality are, as I will show, especially typical of the romances of antiquity, they also evoke and repeat ancient, we may say immemorial, historiographical anxieties and cultural responses. I turn, then, to a moment long before the Middle Ages, and a famous altar from early in the Roman empire, the Ara Pacis Augustae, the Altar of the Augustan Peace. The Altar, commissioned by the Senate to celebrate Augustus' return from three years in Spain and Gaul, and consecrated in 9 BCE, is a walled structure of approximately eleven by twelve meters, raised on a marble base, with steps leading to an interior altar. Despite its relatively modest proportions, its testimony to the benefits of piety and peace are emphatic in its elaborate exterior and interior friezes.⁶

For all the triumphs of Augustus, his bloody resolution of the Civil Wars of the late Republic, and the era of relative peace he instituted, Roman historical thought had been and remained anxiously divided between, on the one hand, a historiography of inevitable cataclysm – whether by military fall (as at Troy, Athens, Carthage) or the ekpyrosis that ends the Great Year – and on the other hand a hope (with Pythagorean roots) that Roman history could be one of cyclic renewal. The Ara Pacis Augustae was a highly wrought effort to promote the latter view, and to organize notions of cyclic renewal around Augustus himself.⁷ It is the temple with which Ovid closes the first book of his *Fasti*, entreating priests to ask of the gods that the structure “with peace may last for ever” (1.709–22).⁸

In the complex bas-relief panels on the external walls of the Ara Pacis, Augustus is carefully aligned with Aeneas and Romulus, locating him in a sequence of foundations and re-foundations, culminating in his own Golden Age.⁹ A smaller frieze on the interior walls of the Altar records its annual priestly sacrifices and rituals. The historical moments of foundation depicted on the exterior friezes, initially experienced as chronological and progressive – from Romulus to Aeneas to Augustus – thus merge into endless and cyclic repetition as one moves past the outer walls

and closer to the altar itself. As Peter Holliday has written, "It is in the representation of this annual sacrifice that two distinct dimensions of temporality intersect."¹⁰ But there is also a kind of stasis implied in the interior frieze, in some tension with the exterior's inevitable reminder of historical cataclysm: Aeneas cannot reach Latium until Troy has fallen in flames, which are themselves a reminder of the ekpyrosis. For all the progressive triumphalism of the outside images of foundation, the interior imagery of endless annual ritual also serves to suspend that exterior temporality from which the anxiety of change cannot be fully evacuated. Chronology and progressive history at once enclose, guarantee, and yet are excluded from the timeless celebratory repetition of the friezes and priestly rituals of the altar's inner precinct.

A similar, less resolved concern seems to have occupied Virgil in the first book of the *Aeneid*, written perhaps a decade before work began on the Ara Pacis. In a famous passage in *Aeneid* Book 1, a band of Trojan survivors led none too successfully by Aeneas finds itself shipwrecked somewhere in North Africa through the machinations of their implacable enemy, Juno. Aeneas' mother, Venus, approaches Jupiter in complaint, and he offers her a comforting prophecy of Aeneas' ultimate triumph. He promises Venus that her Trojans will found an empire without limits of time or space:

*his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:
imperium sine fine dedi.* (1.278–79)

Jupiter further promises that a Caesar will arise from that noble race, whose *imperium* will extend to the oceans and his *fama* to the stars, and who will bar the gates of war with "tightly welded iron plates," a figure echoed by Alexander's walls at Taragonce in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, quoted at the start of this chapter.¹¹

Thus far, Virgil's vision parallels quite suggestively the program Augustus will soon after promote in the Ara Pacis. But for Virgil, what lies within those architectural gates is not a timeless scene of peaceful ritual repetition, as depicted in the interior frieze of the Ara Pacis. Instead, behind Virgil's gates there sits *Furor impius* – "unholy Rage" – "bound / behind his back by a hundred knots of brass" (1.294–96) but very much present, and seething with unvanquished, bloody rage.¹² It is just such an uncertainly bound Furor, marking the limits of the human, that we encountered in Alexander's last great militant exploit at Taragonce and the sealing of the Caspian Gates.

If the Altar of the Augustan Peace, as I suggest, encounters the fears of history by creating an interior space of suspension where linear chronology

is fragilely suspended through the force of architectural space and artistic design, Virgil offers a more temporal vision of history in which there must always be the terror that the living *Furor impius* of war will again break out of its bonds. In what follows, I will claim that much of what occurs in the “antique” enclosures of the twelfth-century imagination operates between tellingly similar alternatives. And I want to claim that this anxiety operates with particular persistence in the Alexander tradition, encoded especially within the confines and analogies of the family. The fears of imperial dissolution and the dispersal of linear chronology focus most obviously on Alexander’s failure in the romance tradition to sire a legitimate heir, or any powerful heir. But family relations and their interruption also repeatedly figure the limits and dangers of social order in these texts, and ultimately the limits of the human.

Even before the Ara Pacis, Augustus had architecturalized his own personal immortality, one of many testimonies to his status as divinity, by constructing his huge, partly subterranean mausoleum. This tomb imitated Etruscan models, thereby commemorating yet another predecessor people of whom the Romans figured themselves as at once conquerors and successors. The mausoleum of Augustus, often described among the *mirabilia urbis Romae*, was only one among many ancient tombs, some by now half-buried and usually in partial ruin, that fascinated the imagination of twelfth-century writers such as William of Malmesbury. Celebrated for its concern with document-based historiography, his *Gesta regum Anglorum* also engages in passages of intriguing fantasy. William writes about the learned – perhaps too learned – Gerbert of Rheims, later Pope Silvester, discovering an ancient, subterranean chamber. It is filled with treasure: “a vast palace with golden walls, golden roofs, every thing of gold; golden soldiers amusing themselves, as it were, with golden dice; a king of the same metal, at table with his queen.”¹³ This scene of timeless grandeur and splendid artifice – indeed, near magic – is lit by a wondrous carbuncle. Yet it persists under perpetual threat. Another statue of a boy holds a bent bow, its arrow aimed at the carbuncle. When Gerbert’s servant dares to steal one golden knife, the arrow flies, all goes dark, and the statues, until now rigid, rush toward them. The two escape, though barely. If the desire of *Furor impius* threatens Virgil’s image of static peace, the human touch of avarice undoes William’s. In passages like this, William’s historiographical imagination, and his meditations on stasis and temporality, converge with the elaborate tombs and wonder chambers I will discuss below, in the romances of antiquity.

Another such space of fragile, endangered permanence leads William to an encounter with Virgilian history. About a generation after Gerbert,

William reports, the Romans come upon the tomb and the uncorrupted body of Pallas, Aeneas' ally and beloved battle companion. His tomb too is permanently lit by a lamp "constructed by magical art." Yet it too is extinguished by over-curious human interference. And the next thing William reports is that Pallas' body, exposed to air and water, re-enters mundane temporality and soon decays.¹⁴ William's Latin narrative of these marvelous enclosures of arrested temporality – precious, dense with artifice, magical, but fragile and subject to mortal interference – puts us close to the more extreme imaginative reaches of the romances of antiquity, though it is significant that William's *Gesta regum Anglorum* predates any of the romances by ten or twenty years. Well before the appearance of such vernacular verse narratives, and generations before the vernacular prose discussed in the following chapter of this volume, historiography is already romancing antiquity.

The tomb of Pallas leads us to one of the wonder spaces of the *Roman d'Eneas*, which records an even more elaborate tomb for Aeneas' perhaps problematically beloved companion. Pallas is killed in battle by Turnus. His corpse is dressed in a precious vestment, "most cunningly woven of gold" [*Tissu a or mout mastrement*], which Dido had given Eneas when she fell in love with him (lines 6186–89).¹⁵ Once returned to Pallas' people, the corpse is prepared with balm so that it will not decay, its youthful beauty rendered permanent. Pallas is then placed inside a magnificent tomb, "*riche a desmesure*" ("immeasurably rich," perhaps even "excessively"), made of solid marble in a hundred colors, and further decorated with gold, enamels, and precious stones. His body is preserved by a sealed system of balm and other preservatives. Just as in William of Malmesbury, and perhaps under his influence, Pallas' tomb here too is lit by a perpetual lamp. And finally the tomb itself is sealed with "*betumoi*" – bitumen. Bitumen has a property, the text adds in a note at once pedantic and coy, that once it is dried, nothing can dissolve it, except for one thing, which it is not "decorous" [*n'est pas gent ne bel ne bien*] to name openly [*apertement*] (lines 6565–67).

The tomb of Pallas in the *Roman d'Eneas* does not just stop the process of mortal decay and arrest the effects of martial violence. It also renders into exquisite if morbid static artifice a sequence of other fearful dangers to history, especially the historical ambitions of twelfth-century Angevin aristocracy. Virgil had structured Aeneas and Pallas as doubles to the militant Homeric lovers, Achilles and Patroclus, a pairing at least potentially homosexual that posed dangers both moral and genealogical for the audience of the *Roman d'Eneas*. Dying without an heir is a tragedy that

Pallas' father Evander articulates eloquently in the eulogy he utters over the body of his son. But for all its apparently safe suspension of this erotic danger, its transformation of the sexually problematic body of Pallas into a scientific and artistic wonder, his tomb also raises again other fears long established in the *Eneas*. The robe in which the corpse is initially dressed, Dido's gift to Eneas during their love affair, links that past heterosexual transgression – with its threat of illegitimate offspring and permanent detour from the founding of Rome – to this potentially homosexual liaison. The sense of a female danger to history, and the possibility that the tomb is not quite suspended from time, is also raised by the text's coy refusal, noted above, to name what it is that can unseal bitumen. At least the clerical audience of the *Eneas* would have known Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* quite well, and could easily have found the answer there: menstrual blood will melt it (*Etymologies* XVI.ii).¹⁶

Tombs and related rooms of enclosure, high artifice, and arrested time appear throughout the romances of antiquity. They become ever more elaborate as the *Roman d'Eneas* progresses, reaching their apex with the tomb of Camilla, the woman warrior who is largely admired in the text yet poses a clear source of anxiety in her mixture of gendered roles. Camilla's tomb is an architectural as well as a decorative marvel, standing on a single pillar upon which balance a series of expanding concentric rings. The slightly later *Roman de Troie* presses these issues yet further, with the famous Chambre de Beauté, in which courtly eroticism, medical science, and marvelously delayed mortality converge on the body of the hero Hector.¹⁷ The structure of the Chambre goes well past marble, being built instead entirely of alabaster, decorated with Arab gold, and filled with every precious gem and a series of mobile statues. The Chambre has a strange double function, as at once a healing place for the grievously wounded Hector, run by the wisest of doctors, Brot le Puillanz, and a site for debates on courtly love and quasi-magical instruction. The Chambre de Beauté has been much discussed, but I would suggest in this context that it functions as a space so intensely courtly and decorated that its activities serve to efface, or temporarily replace, the world of battle and the huge historical danger to Troy posed by Hector suffering so great a wound. The very length of its description, over three hundred lines, pulls the narrative to a halt, providing a kind of textual enclosure that brackets an episode of historical stress; and its emphasis on the uncanny diverts attention from the very specific and militant source of Hector's wound.

Tombs and related enclosed chambers, then, become stages for marvelous artifice and astounding feats of technology that avert or suspend

temporality, increasingly as the romances develop and respond to one another. They involve uncanny machinery like the eternal flame in the tomb of Pallas, and the bodies they hold, like Camilla or Hector, are often elaborately preserved against corruption. Often supplied with epitaphs, they suggest both the permanence and the eerie stasis of the codex itself within a culture of texts performed.¹⁸

The earliest of the romances of antiquity, the *Roman de Thèbes*, makes some related gestures of stasis – interrupting the onward thrust of historic battles – by means of fabrics: tapestries, and highly decorated tents that are pitched at scenes of battle or siege. Instances of such fabrics are associated with King Adrastus. In his palace chamber, Adrastus has a tapestry said to be woven by Arachne, another instance of a static object and work of elaborate artifice with a background of a mortal woman who challenges an established order, in this case, the Olympian divinities. Far more elaborate is the description of his tent, a summa of clerkly learning placed in the service of martial heroism.¹⁹ It is explicitly called “*merveilleux*” (4300) and painted with “*meinte merveille*” (4305). Over the entry to the tent is depicted a *mappa mundi*, described in detail, including its divisions, areas of habitation, cities, kings, and kingdoms. It is entirely worked in gold and bordered with precious gems. Other panels depict the twelve months, the seasons, the laws of the ancient Greeks, and stories of their kings. Yet the tent is not just a container for scientific learning, geography, and wonder. It is also a space of containment within the ongoing narrative of civil strife, arresting the narrative (a little like the *Chambre de Beauté*), and causing people within the narrative to suspend their own action. The tent is such a splendid thing that whoever looks at it continues to do so [*qui l'esgarde pas ne repose*] (4343), it so arouses his curiosity.

It would be a narrow response to turn these tombs, tents, and related artifices only into allegories of reading, decipherment, or exegesis. It is worth noting, though, that the position of the clerical romanceur can be intriguingly analogous to these tomb and tent scenes. They open access to an arcane, Latinate past, creating a perhaps evanescent connection for an audience whose motivations may be quite different from those of the clerk: imagine Adrastus taking off his filthy armor inside his tent of marvels. In this context, further, we can think about the codex containing the *roman antique* itself (and often more than one) as a kind of delay or enclosure, raising the specter of historical disaster but making it an object, something that can be merely looked at, even laid aside. As a medium of both access and potential delay – a codex may be read, or not read – these very manuscripts doubly contain their fearful histories.

This argument, so far, has moved largely among the standard triad of the romances of antiquity: *Thèbes*, *Eneas*, and *Troie*, all of them composed across roughly a decade around the middle of the twelfth century. The stories here are widely known, and each text has received considerable critical discussion. I would not claim, however, that these occasions of fearful but contained histories constitute a monolithic anxiety about temporality and the threats to ordered history posed by versions of desire, be they militant or erotic. Instead, this essay now turns to some occasions in which texts react to similar fears about the instability of history, genealogy, and empire, but do so even more complexly, often in a spirit at least of resignation, incomplete and insecure containment, and even at moments in a spirit of play. To explore this notion of a certain delight taken in the face of temporal disruption and imperial loss, I return to aspects of the Alexander tradition, especially the text with which this chapter opened, the wonderful and understudied Anglo-Norman *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, composed by Thomas of Kent in the last quarter of the century.

Especially as compared with Priam in the *Roman de Troie*, or Dido or Eneas in the *Roman d'Eneas*, Alexander is not a great builder. Rather, he invades as a conqueror, or infiltrates as a disguised trickster, cities and fortifications that already exist: Thebes, Athens, Babylon. Alexander even destroys some great cities, such as Thebes. He does found and name a number of cities after himself, but the romance versions take little interest in describing the architecture of these multiple Alexandrias. Indeed, this chapter opened with Alexander's most notable architectural achievement, the problematic wall at Taragonce. In other ways, too, the Alexander poems stand slightly apart from the usual scholarly grouping of the romances of antiquity. Both the Anglo-Norman *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* and the continental Old French *Roman d'Alexandre* are formally distinct from the octosyllabic couplets of *Thèbes*, *Eneas*, and *Troie*; instead, the Alexander poems draw on the monorhymed *laisse* of the *chanson de geste* and of course the Alexandrine line. At the same time, as I will show, the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* in particular claims at some points an explicit kinship with the romances of antiquity, especially the *Roman d'Eneas*, creating an overtly textual genealogy. Yet the slightly later date of the Alexander poems – the last quarter of the twelfth century – also allows the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* a self-consciously responsive, perhaps even a corrective view of issues and preoccupations in its textual ancestry. One reason that makes such an exploration of alternate views necessary, of course, is the fact that Alexander dies relatively young, without issue

(at least in the version of his life reported in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*), and that his loosely gathered empire fragments immediately upon his death. The historical facts dictate a search for alternate forms of society and heroic identity, which themselves prove to be as uncertain, at times as destabilizing, as the internally varied empire he gathers in his travels.

Thomas's *Roman* has a particular relevance to the conference and city at which this essay had its own origins. Among the many ways that Thomas's romance diverges from its predecessor texts is in its many, even incoherent, models of territorial control. The earlier romances of antiquity operate largely within traditional feudal modes of military conquest and arguments over dominion. The Alexander of the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* and its sibling text, the continental *Roman d'Alexandre*, often employs similar modes of control, but he also engages in complex alliances, and sometimes leaves territory in the hands of its initial possessors, in exchange for the merest formalities of respect or homage. At a key moment between his defeat of Darius the Mede and his conquest of India, the Alexander of the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* approaches Jerusalem (*laissez* 187–93).²⁰ Met by the chief priest wearing a golden breastplate, Alexander worships not the man, he explains, but the god whom the priest serves. He enters the city, worships in the inhabitants' temple by their rites, and leaves the city free to follow the laws of its fathers. This encounter at once offers alternate versions of religious and territorial dominion and evokes some of the complexities of Alexander's paternity and identity: one reason he spares Jerusalem is a dream he recalls there, in which an elderly man, dressed like the chief priest, had promised him future glory. In turn, that dream echoes a prophecy by Alexander's adulterous father, Nectanabus, delivered as his death approaches because of a trap executed by Alexander. The episode at Jerusalem, then, offers both an alternate model of dominion and a new, more promising version among the many paternities Alexander encounters across the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*.

Far more immediate, and articulated in the sometimes contesting claims of these two Alexander romances, is the issue of whether Alexander's birth coheres with the historiographical and political models of patrilineage persistently encoded in the earlier romances of antiquity, or whether that birth rather derives from the genealogically and geographically branching, illegitimate fatherhood of the Egyptian Nectanabus. What is certain, and certainly of some concern to the aristocratic descendants of "William the Bastard" or his companions, who were an early audience of both texts, is the double paternity of Alexander in different romances – the legitimate

son of Philip of Macedon or the bastard of Nectanabus, a paternity that becomes (at least) triple when, later on, Alexander claims to be the son of Jupiter Ammon.

In the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, Alexander spends much of his life asserting Philip's fatherhood, attacking and killing those who mock him by reference to Nectanabus. Yet across the tradition, he also claims his own divinity as the son of Jupiter Ammon, the very god in whose disguise Nectanabus entered the bed of Philip's wife, the (not quite unsuspecting) Olympias.²¹ Nectanabus' deception of Olympias – or his seduction, the distinction is carefully left fuzzy – introduces elements of cunning, role-play, and artifice that will be crucial in the later career of his son Alexander. He seems almost a double for the clerkly romanceur – a figure of ingenuity interiorized in other twelfth-century texts (as discussed in [Chapter 4](#) of this volume). Nectanabus makes his way into Olympias' bed through his uncanny learning and by feats of theatrical magic. One of his specific techniques is to write Olympias' name on a wax image (lines 226–29), at once a stock necromantic gesture and an echo of drafting texts on wax tablets. And of course, Nectanabus gets called a “*mester*,” a *magister*, as the clerkly romanceur might also be. Nectanabus pretends to be the oracular messenger of Ammon, but enters Olympias' chamber garbed as the god or a dragon, a disguise he discards before crawling into her bed. But he is genuinely capable of sending magical dreams to both Olympias and Philip, by means of wax figures, inscriptions, and incantation. In all these ways, he doubles the figure of the poet – at once artificer, enchanter, and part-parent to the story – within the text.

Alexander encounters a whole sequence of dying fathers. He kills Nectanabus (lines 476–98), then regrets his act when the dying magician convincingly asserts his paternity. Yet Alexander equally mourns the death of Philip. Alexander's quest for authentic fathers goes even further, though. He weeps at the death of his long-time enemy Darius the Mede, whose last acts both render feudal homage (kneeling and offering his hands) and make Alexander his heir, as if he were an eldest son (lines 3677–3709). If he generates a strange plethora of fathers, soon dying or dead, Alexander is equally destabilized in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* in his failure to produce legitimate heirs. At once the sum of all the qualities of his fathers, Alexander yet dies without clear paternity or an heir. The killer of his own father, Alexander himself ultimately dies when he drinks poisoned wine provided by still another, inverse or anti-father, the monstrous Antipater.

In fact, the entire *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* is a romance of shifting, uncertain, multiple, and sometimes even absent fathers, almost an

anatomy of the weak points in the emerging patrilineage of the later twelfth century, and a multistranded narrative that formally challenges the largely linear historiography of the earlier romances of antiquity, particularly the *Eneas*. Alexander's behavior veers repeatedly between Philip's militancy and the trickster artistry of Nectanabus; he can himself be a player in theatrical disguise, whose travels seek out strange knowledge as eagerly as he does geographical conquest. At such points Alexander verges toward (though he never merges with) the role of the performing clerk-poet of the text in which he appears.

Motherhood equally, if less emphatically, contributes to the multiple and destabilized social and historiographical models of the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*. Alexander's own mother, Olympias, is both persistently present in his life and a source of scorn by others. He encounters a sequence of virtually alternate mothers who imply a more varied and perhaps more hopeful range of types than did his ever-dying fathers. Both in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* and in the *Alexandreis* of Walter of Châtillon, after his first triumph over Darius, Alexander slays most of his enemy's followers, but Darius' women – his wife, mother, and sister – are spared.²² Again, in the *Alexandreis*, after Darius' second defeat, his wife dies, still in Alexander's respectful custody. Alexander grieves for her, the text says, as if she were his mother or sister. He builds a tomb for Darius' wife, the most elaborate set piece, and the most annotated passage, in the entire Latin epic.²³ Powerful women and new varieties of motherhood multiply around the later episodes of the romance. Scythian women warriors appear as allies, as do the Amazons with their two queens, as Alexander prepares for his final great military effort, the attack on Gog and Magog and their city of Taragonce, with which this essay opened (*laissez* 383–85). Both groups arrive to assist Alexander, yet they present a radically new and edgy version of motherhood that largely dispenses with the role of men. These alternate, militant mothers arrive to assist Alexander in his battle with a final enemy who, as we have seen, defines by geography and practice the extreme boundaries of the human.

The Alexander tradition of course explores the limits of the human, famously, in its delineation of geographical extremity, the edges of human occupation or civilized practice. These areas, the repeated objects of Alexander's military or purely curious attention, are populated by a variety of quasi-human nations, some of them positive but many more of uncertain humanity by reason of physiology or sexual practice, particularly that of incest. At the edges of the world in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, then, there survive genealogical forces completely opposite to the increasingly

dominant model of patrilineage and primogeniture of the late twelfth century. Such fearful alternatives are placed at the geographical edge, but like the Griffeins, neither Alexander nor the text can pretend finally to contain them.

But I would suggest that these spectacular challenges to human identity and social order are only extreme forms of the anxieties of fatherhood and motherhood that, as we have seen, pursue Alexander throughout his life. Rather early in his career, in a digressive moment in his long march toward a second great battle with Darius, Alexander passes Thebes, and demands its submission and tribute (*laissez* 102–12). Insulted at once about his possible illegitimacy and his mother's character, Alexander invades and begins to destroy the city. A rich Theban harper eloquently begs his mercy, among other reasons, because Alexander's great ancestor Hercules was born there. But when he also hears the story of Oedipus and his transgression of the incest taboo, Alexander slays all the inhabitants and burns the city to the ground (lines 2252–88). He wants to erase a collateral ancestry that more recently has featured the kind of incest, hence confused lineage, and fraternal strife that is so persistent an anxiety in the Alexander romances. Yet as the harper told him, Alexander has a familial relation to the iconic city of incest and sibling warfare, which he cannot expunge.

This whole congeries of limit cases crowds ever more intensely around Alexander as his story speeds along toward his death. It is soon after the encounter with the extreme limits of the human at Taragonce, and with his first and only military stalemate, that Alexander hears the prophecies of his own death, certain to come within a year. He reacts to the news of this approaching final boundary with some fear, with political cunning (trying to keep it a secret from his unreliable ally King Porus of India), and, I would claim, with a degree of transformative gaiety. Despite being "*esmaiez*" [dismayed] by what he has learned, Alexander "*veanz ses barons se fet baud et haitez*" [he gave an impression of gaiety in front of his barons] (lines 6927–28); in still another of his many performances, he gives the appearance of happiness.

In this narrowing period between reliable prophecy and certain death, and after having faced and walled off convergences of the bestial and the human at Taragonce, Alexander takes up a long-delayed invitation to become the lover of Candace, rich queen and powerful mother, whose realm neighbors upon several more incestuous races (*laissez* 505–28). In this episode, like his father Nectanabus before him, Alexander chooses to make his erotic approach through theatrical play, disguised as his own messenger. He travels under the safe-conduct of Candace's son Candeules, whose

kidnapped wife Alexander has just had rescued. Candace awaits, in the company of musicians in a scene that emphasizes artifice, play, and the analogies between her position and that of the courtly poet:

And she had them playing on viol and harp a new tune
 How lord Eneas loved lady Dido,
 And how he went off to sea in his swift galley,
 How she cried her lament, high in her dwelling,
 And how at last she burned herself in her palace.
 Candace was pensive [*Pensive en est Candace*] at the close of that song,
 When behold! Here's her son, Candeules was his name,
 Holding his noble companion by the right hand.

(lines 7650–57)

The analogies with the *Roman's* predecessor text, the *Roman d'Eneas*, are explicit: like Eneas, Alexander will stay with Candace only briefly, accept her lavish gifts, then move on to his own fate. But, as with so many moments in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, the poem both encounters its textual past and explores alternatives to it. The clerkly romanceur builds for himself a kind of ideal audience, one that listens thoughtfully (one sense of “pensive”) yet leaves Dido textually contained, outside Candace's own history, as she constructs for herself a consciously alternate history. I have noted a similar function in the *Chambre de Beauté* in the *Roman de Troie*, but here, when this containment issues back into time, it does so without death or tragedy. The song itself both records and yet contains Dido, renders her an object of meditation, and in Candace's case a precedent to be avoided. Candace has already set the terms of their encounter, and sees through Alexander's disguise even as he performs it. She privately exposes Alexander's disguise, showing him the image she had earlier arranged to be made of him.

Thus you see surely, lord noble king,
 That Candace is cleverer minded than Alexander [*plus cointe qe Alisandre
 de corage*].

(lines 7703–4)

Though she has invited his approach as a possible husband (“*a pier*,” which could also mean “as an equal”), she witnesses his departure with no display of grief, and no hint that she will lose power because of their brief affair.

Also unlike Dido, Candace has two militant sons, whom she is as busy controlling during Alexander's visit as she is seducing her guest. Indeed, when her other son suspects this “messenger” is Alexander himself, against whom he holds a deep grudge, Candace instantly restrains him. “Whoever

harms this man," she declares, "will no longer be my friend or my son" [*Mis amis ne my fiz jamés ne seroît*]. She commands that Alexander "be left in peace" [*bien en pes soit*], as harming him would "diminish my honor, / Shame me and enrage your brother" (lines 7792–99). In fact, in this passage, elements of protective mother and lover nearly converge in Candace, but in a setting of such controlled artifice that the impact I think is one of piquant play, rather than incestuous threat. This is yet another among many instances, then, where the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* includes powerful women, as lovers, mothers, and battle companions, in ways that seem at once to acknowledge and claim its predecessor texts, yet accept the presence of these figures which the other romances of antiquity often put aside in tombs.

These pressures and anxieties in Alexander's life, however – the knowledge of his own mortality; his own multiple, unstable, and fractured identities; his increasing exposure to the fragilities of and alternatives to human social order – all these overloads of awareness never fully suppress Alexander's bursts of pleasure and joyfulness, his elation in, and despite, his body and mortality. Even awaiting his prophesied end, Alexander extends a narrative train of essentially pointless acts of delight in performance, artifice, and self-creation that constitute not a denial, but a dismissal, of death. His one elaborated sexual affair in the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* involves at once frank bodily pleasure, and a dense play of artifice – music, sculpture, dramatic performance. Perhaps it is this sense of created delight in the face of the terrors of mortal subjectivity (to have unknowable antecedents and an unknowable future after death) that renders Alexander such a persistently heroic figure in our cultures. For all the comparative openness and play with which the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* encounters its terrors of history – parenthood, the breakdowns of genealogy, eros, and mortality – it nevertheless displays its own textual lineage in its efforts to efface and contain (if only by means of the artifice of representation) the more extreme of those terrors.

I close this chapter on medieval antiquities with a return to Roman antiquity and the Ara Pacis Augustae, and some twentieth-century efforts at the artifices of enclosure. The Ara Pacis disappeared under the accretions of a flood plain sometime in late antiquity, and was rediscovered partly under a sixteenth-century palazzo. As part of his multifaceted efforts to connect modern Italy, and himself, with the ancient empire, Mussolini had it moved in 1938 from its original site on the Campus Martius to one end of the newly opened Piazza Augusto Imperatore.²⁴ Two other sides of the square were filled by monumental four-story buildings in fascist style,

and the fourth, loosely, by two Baroque churches. The Ara Pacis, fragile and incomplete, was protected and contained by a superstructure designed by the architect Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, whose father was Jewish and whose mother was Catholic, and who was called off the project in 1938, with the passage of Hitler's Racial Laws. That building, essentially Morpurgo's design, left spaces at each of its ends, giving access and sight lines to the Tiber behind it.²⁵ The middle of the Piazza is filled, off-center, by the remains of Augustus' mausoleum, also considerably renovated by Mussolini's archeologists and city planners in the years before 1938. Mussolini thus assembled a square to celebrate Rome's ancient empire and his own, marked by the architecture of the early empire and, on two sides, buildings in fascist style. "Deliberately visible, opulently presented and demarcated by new constructions that attempted to supply new, authoritative legibility to that '*romanità* of the modern', the new Piazza Augusto Imperatore functioned as a gateway to a new collective experience of time, with visitors-pilgrims invited into a sacred *chronos* and space where conventional time and place were suspended."²⁶

Morpurgo's superstructure has recently been removed, however, to be replaced by a dazzling white museum – the first major building in central Rome since the Second World War – designed by Richard Meier of Getty Center fame. Meier's building forms the west end of the Piazza; the fascist buildings occupy the north and east; and the two baroque churches create the Piazza's looser south boundary. There has been enormous comment on Meier's design, its appropriateness or inappropriateness to the site, its respect or indifference to the style of the Ara Pacis. What fascinates me, though, is the way that Meier's building rises from a long wall extending from corner to corner of the Piazza. It is still an unsuccessful public space, but what Meier has done, whether intentionally or not I could not say, is to enclose, as Morpurgo in several senses did not, Mussolini's fascist project, our own most recent fearful history, barring it visual access at least to the Tiber that is so central to Rome's foundational myths. Whether this particular enclosure of the fearful history of fascism will succeed better than Alexander's enclosure of the monstrous races, we must wait to see, with an anxiety not fundamentally different from that of the twelfth-century audiences of the romances of antiquity.

*Troy and Rome, two narrative presentations of history
in the thirteenth century: the Roman de Troie
en prose and the Faits des Romains*

Catherine Croizy-Naquet

Translated by Jonathan Stavsky

The blossoming of ancient historiography at the beginning of the thirteenth century coincides with the emergence of prose, until then a rather marginal form. This emergence, accompanied by a profound change in the way history was being conceived, facilitates a novel approach to temporal experience. By means of the truth that it engages and the linguistic practices that it associates with such truth, prose expands the field of consciousness – whether in renewing the history of Troy, as claimed by the thirteenth- through fifteenth-century rewritings of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, or in promoting the history of Rome, its actual entryway into the historical-literary scene.¹

Two prose texts illustrate this transformation. Relying principally on accounts by Sallust, Caesar, Lucan, and Suetonius, the *Faits des Romains* (*Deeds of the Romans*), which was composed in the Île de France around 1213–14, retraces the life of Julius Caesar.² Its anonymous author expected his work to encompass all the Roman emperors but, for unknown reasons, was unable to bring this project to completion. The work was nonetheless immensely popular up to the fifteenth century. The similarly anonymous *Roman de Troie en prose* (the prose *Romance of Troy*), labeled *Prose 1* by Marc-René Jung, appeared, according to its epilogue, sometime in the middle or the second half of the thirteenth century in Corinth, in the free principality of Morea.³ Presumably the oldest prose version, this text relates the history of Troy from its origins to its downfall and follows the homeward journey of the Greek leaders, leaving the Trojan diaspora open-ended.

Composed for apparently aristocratic and/or scholarly audiences, the *Faits des Romains* and the *Roman de Troie en prose* share a number of writing principles. Prose, thought to be as close to reality as possible, is to serve the main features of historiography. Latin authorities underlie both the plotline and the division of time by chronology and genealogy, which coordinates the succession of generations and stresses the

transmission of their values. Still, the techniques used by the two texts are not homogeneous. The *Roman de Troie* is written in a sober and unadorned prose that demystifies the idealizing version of the legend poetically fashioned by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in the twelfth century.⁴ The author of the prose version inscribes the Trojan legend into a historical continuum in conformity with the nascent practice of universal histories in French, for which the vernacular model is the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* (*Ancient History down to Caesar*). By contrast, the compiler of the *Faits des Romains*, who has no verse precedent from which he must untangle himself, elaborates a poetic prose style that is enriched by epic and romance devices. A collator of disparate sources, he composes his earlier narrative by availing himself of verse literature at a time when prose has not yet attained to a true literary status – although writers increasingly turn to prose in the early thirteenth century as they seek to “authenticate” literary narratives (Chapter 6). In adapting imaginative techniques, the author resuscitates the period of Caesar and renders it palpable through the *mise-en-scène* of events. These different ways of perceiving and recovering ancient times can be clarified by a study of the intellectual and socio-cultural contexts of the two works. More broadly, such a study can illuminate a historiographical poetics that raises fundamental questions about the relationship between history and morality and about the still problematic alliance of history and fiction.

The measure of Trojan and Roman times

In accordance with the first duty of medieval historians, these authors place the Trojan and Roman events in time, relying on the elements supplied by their sources.⁵ To construct the intermediary third time between cosmic time and lived time that Paul Ricoeur has defined as historical time, they resort to chronology in the form of “calendarian” time.⁶ For the *Deeds of the Romans*, the landmark event is not so much the lost Golden Age evoked in the prologue (p. 2, lines 6–7) as it is the foundation of Rome (p. 5, lines 1–9), whose circumstances the author briefly recapitulates before passing on to the reign of Tarquin – the last Roman king – and detailing the various “[official] dignities” [*dignete*] (pp. 5–7). He then begins to retrace Caesar’s life from his undated birth to his assassination at the age of fifty-six, followed by the violent death of all his murderers over the course of the next three years.⁷

Except for the entry into the material, which involves a drastic compression of time (and yet clearly situates the imperial era launched by

Caesar in the continuous and progressive chain of successive institutions), the chronological boundaries of this work are those dictated by the biography of the Roman leader. Between these two extremities, the date of his birth and that of his death, Caesar's life-story is split into fragments (for example, official posts, the Gallic War, the Civil War) delineated by the piecing together of ancient sources.⁸

Within these sequences, references to specific years like "in the twentieth year" [*au vintiesme an*] (p. 25) or "the previous year" [*l'an devant*] (p. 310) do not permit an absolute chronology, given the absence of an initial date owing to the sources' imprecision and the medieval habit of reserving such dates for legal documents alone.⁹ By contrast, the frequent division into seasons, months, weeks, days, parts of the day, and hours does provide an exact rendition of short time. In the part devoted to the Gallic War, the compiler takes up this division from Caesar, transposes it, not without certain errors, and even develops it to articulate the phases of a battle.¹⁰ He likewise retains from his sources the duration of its various modalities.¹¹ On several occasions, the compiler splits the linear timeline to bring two series of events into the foreground, for instance the siege of Marseilles carried out by Brutus and the Spanish war led by Caesar (p. 421). He thus confers a depth of field to his narrative that answers his wish to achieve a totalizing synoptic grasp.

A similar sequential structure governs *Troy*, which tells the story of one city from its foundation to its ruin. The author reproduces the stages chosen by Dares (in the Latin form of his early "history") and taken up again in the twelfth century by Benoît: the capture of the Golden Fleece, the abduction of Hesione, the first destruction of Troy, its rebuilding by Priam, the abduction of Helen, the twenty-two battles, the downfall of Troy brought about by Ulysses' ploy, and the homeward journeys.¹² Compared with the *Deeds of the Romans*, indications of weeks, days, and hours are scarce (just as they are in Benoît), except for the duration of battles and truces, which is carefully recorded. Such indications offer just a very relative perception of time and serve no other purpose than tying up the events. The elaborate kinds of temporal coordination that appear in forms of romance with systematic *entrelacement* (discussed in [Chapter 11](#) of this volume) are not features of the prose *Troy*. But the writer of the work, anxious to order time in synchrony, sporadically interlaces events by means of stock phrases: "let us now get back to the tale" [*or retournerons a dire*].¹³

The existential experience of time, with its change of seasons or – on a smaller scale – the passage of day into night, likewise regulates the logical and chronological sequencing of the narrative.¹⁴ As in Benoît, the author

contents himself with vague formulas like “when spring came” [*quant vint au novel tens*], which hark back to the motif of *reverdie* current in lyric poetry and romances; he draws on such temporal markers to signal the renewal of actions, combats, and navigations (p. 39, § 59). The *Deeds of the Romans*, by contrast, uses the rhythm of the seasons as more than a mere organizing principle: over the course of the Gallic War, it determines the moment of battles and truces. Thus, for example, “once the middle of March came and Caesar saw the weather was convenient” [*lues que li marz fu moiez et Cesar vit covenable tens*] (p. 141, lines 17–18), he was able to launch his campaign against the Armorican cities.

All the same, the available information is sometimes ridden with lacunas, forcing the compiler to develop the spatial dimension of his narrative alongside the temporal one. Through such means he succeeds in rendering the flow of time, which otherwise he would have been unable to calculate, and in articulating its different strata. When recounting Cato’s expedition to Libya, he privileges the lived time of ordeals and sufferings by materializing it in a hostile space that is difficult to cross, as the encyclopedic description of serpents bears witness.¹⁵ Yet space may also oppose the sequential chronological time used to narrate the conquest; it thereby constitutes a line of flight from time itself when, over the course of the Gallic War, the imperfect tense is used outside the tale of the conquest to describe places and the Gallic peoples that resist being conquered (pp. 220–25).

The historical third time thus lends itself to multiple combinations, which are refined by biological time. The importance of engenderment – of procreation and the linking together of generations – is recalled in the *Deeds of the Romans* during the Battle of Pharsalus, which sees whole lineages decimated (p. 517, lines 25–27).¹⁶ In *Prose I*, the only real genealogy which, for all its gaps, duplicates chronological time is a lineage with a long continuation in medieval and early modern romance, as other chapters in this volume demonstrate – the genealogy of the Trojans, from their founder Tros down to Laudamenta and his offspring.¹⁷ He is partly connected to several lineages that, at one point or another, are woven into the history of Troy – especially in the section dealing with the homeward journeys, where various newcomers related to the Greek heroes Ulysses and Agamemnon are brought into play. The compiler of the *Deeds of the Romans*, who is generally faithful to his sources, provides with similar briefness the lines of descent or a familial relation going back one or more generations.¹⁸ Completing his source at the cost of some errors, he establishes the genealogical tree of the Maccabees as a historical reminder,

creating a sort of narrativized genealogy that helps to explain the troubles in the East and their consequences for Roman history.¹⁹ Most often, however, he omits the “lineages” of mythological heroes, which are foreign to his “historical” project.²⁰

It is with a different intention that, at the beginning of his work, under the authority of Isidore of Seville’s citation of Virgil,²¹ the compiler places Caesar in “the lineage of Aeneas, who had a son called Iulus, whence the name of Julius is derived” [*le lignage d’Enee, qui ot fiuz qui ot non Iulus, dont li nons de Juilles fu estraiz*] (p. 8, lines 9–10). Confirmed by etymology, this prestigious ancestry, at once human and divine, immediately surrounds Caesar with a particular aura and announces his prodigious destiny. The Roman leader takes advantage of his ancestral line during a pilgrimage to the ruins of Troy: praying to the gods, he declares himself as “one indebted to you who is of Trojan lineage, grandson to Aeneas and Ascanius and Iulus” [*uns vostres redevables qui est dou lignage a cels de Troie, nies Enee et Ascanii et Iuli*] (p. 616, lines 9–10).²² In a double upsurge of nostalgia and vigor, he even looks forward to rebuilding Troy (p. 616, lines 15–16). This propitiatory vow, quite paradoxical when coming from the mouth of a warlord who wishes to make Rome the most powerful city in the world, underscores Caesar’s need to anchor himself in the time of his origins and to stand on equal footing with heroes such as Hector – heroes with a desired posterity (p. 615). The same feelings stir within him when, on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Alexander the Great – a figure who by the thirteenth century had already become the subject of an expansive literature (see [Chapter 2](#) of this volume) – he compares himself to this conqueror in his quest for power and appetite for knowledge, arguing for a spiritual kinship transcending that of the blood.²³ He thus strikes root in the immemorial time of myth, hoping to acquire a legitimate place in Roman history and to enter the lineage of greater conquerors. Incompatible with a strict historical ambition, this escapade is barred from *Prose I*, whose author makes every effort to historicize the mythological times of the Trojan War by releasing them from the marvelous, from the unknown and ineffable condition that is due to their antiquity.

In both works, the temporal landscape is narrowed down to the level of facts; yet, owing to the sources and the limits of transposition, their chronological flow remains patent – as shown by the recurrence of the formula “at this time” [*en icel tens*].²⁴ The authors compensate for these lacunas and incertitudes by narrativizing the events contained in their sources, in the form of a history “propped up by the reciting of events” [*bercée par le récitatif événementiel*], as Roger Chartier has put it.²⁵

Thinking Trojan and Roman times

In fact, these authors' relations to the Latin authorities permit them to measure Trojan and Roman times, to think them through, and to make them present in their spatio-temporal otherness. The author of the *Deeds of the Romans* does not cease to demonstrate that his work is founded on knowledge of the other: that it is organized, according to Michel de Certeau, as a "layered text" [*texte feuilleté*].²⁶ The title appearing in many of the manuscripts²⁷ – *The Deeds of the Romans, Compiled from Sallust, Suetonius, and Lucan* – specifies its corpus of Latin authorities as well as its working method: compilation, which, as an ideal of erudition, fulfills the "scientific" function of accumulating true and verifiable contents. The demand for truth is manifested by referring to sources, a *topos* that the compiler transfigures by mentioning with relative accuracy the names of the authors, the titles of their works, and even the chapter in question (thus "the ninth book of Lucan" [*Li nuemes livres de Lucan*], p. 574) as concrete proof both of the seriousness of his activity and of his knowledge. He names and cites several other sources: ancients such as Virgil or Ovid; Isidore of Seville; and the Bible, under the heading of "Holy Writ" [*sainte Esriture*]. But he rarely indicates the sporadic or less familiar ones.²⁸

The author of *Prose 1* likewise bases his historical account on its relations to its source, since he affirms in the epilogue that he has "brought to the end the true story as it had been found in the language of the Greeks and had then been translated into Latin" [*a menee a fin la vraye histoire selon ce qu'elle fu trouvee ou langage des Gregoys, et puis translattee en latin*]. In naming his learned sources, he resorts to generic and often interchangeable terms such as "history" [*estoire*], "text" [*escrit*], "author" [*autor*], and "sage" [*sages*]; he also uses the word *eschatologues* in its etymological sense of enumeration or list, perhaps with reference to a sort of manual. Curiously, however, the only instance in which he cites Dares (§ 198) is out of place: the fact attributed to Dares is found neither in that source's *De excidio Troiae historia* (*History of the Destruction of Troy*) nor in Benoît's adaptation, nor even in the translation of Dares included in the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*.²⁹ Unsurprisingly, he leaves out Benoît's name, his main source of inspiration, since contemporary texts do not constitute an authority; it is above all a verse romance replete with *bons diz* [elaborations]. As though making compensation, he insists on being a researcher in direct contact with his source through expressions such as "now we find . . ." [*or trouvons nos*] (§ 270).

The work done on the documentary corpus is backed by a pursuit of objectivity of utterance. In the *Deeds of the Romans*, the "objective" persona

of the historian (in Roland Barthes's terms)³⁰ relies on a present "we" to confront and evaluate the documents and to indicate their lacunas or omissions.³¹ This persona stresses the enterprise of literal translation through such entries into the material as "Lucan says that . . ." [*Lucans dit que*]; the narrator calls attention to his selection of passages, ordering the text by means of formulas of transition, flashbacks, or foreshadowings. In *Prose 1*, the situation of utterance is twofold. Expressing himself in the guise of the indefinite pronoun *on* [they, one] or the personal "we" – or even effacing himself in deference to the source designated by the word "story" [*contes*] in the famous formula "now the story says" [*or dist li contes*] (§ 329) – this writer is a historian who directs the tale. But he also acts as a moralist when expressing the sense of "feeling" in exclamations of pity or in judgments accompanied by addresses to God.³²

In this case, he shows himself to be divided between the reality of the past, which he has inherited, and that of his present research and writing. Even if the past reaches the present via the historical source, perpetuates itself in the present, and affects it, that past is configured by the narrativization of an author who cannot do without his cultural upbringing, the environment in which he has evolved, or the knowledge at his disposal of the Trojan past and beyond.³³ This gap between the past and the present of the source in the form of documents gathered under one's eyes, between that which is no longer and discursive constructions, explains why – in spite of the common antiquity of their subjects – the two authors do not perceive the otherness of Troy and of Rome in the same way.

In thinking about the Trojan past, the author of *Troy* depends on a Christian conception of a finalized and objectivized time regarded from a historical and eschatological perspective. This conception, which informs the structure of universal histories, fully developed by the thirteenth century in the vernacular tongues,³⁴ leads him to inscribe his material in a historical continuum that brings together profane and biblical histories: from the beginning of time with the initial biblical reference to Shem, son of Noah, down to the aftermath of Troy with the formative figure of Laudementa, at the conclusion of a text that remains open to possible continuations; in certain respects, this figure is close to the future Messiah.³⁵ Relying on the combination of an eschatological time and a linear time that share one origin (their creation by God), a decisive watershed (the Incarnation), and a progression oriented toward a single end, he relegates the history of Troy to the period before Revelation, the period of error.³⁶

For his part, the compiler of the *Deeds of the Romans* is not free from the Christian conception of time in thinking about Roman time: on the

most literal level, when he transposes a date to the Christian calendar (“it was right in the month of September, on the eve of the day in which we Christians celebrate the feast of St. Matthew the Evangelist” [*ce fu droit ou mois de septenbre, la veille ou le jor que nos, crestien, fèsons la feste saint Mahiu li evangeliste*], p. 559, lines 22–24), and on the level of phenomena at large, when, passing the Latin authorities through the sieve of the supreme Authority that is Scripture, he remodels deeds, people, and beliefs in accordance with the values of his times – the most striking example being that of Cato the Stoic, who becomes a paragon of Christian virtue.³⁷

All the same, religion is more of a cultural paradigm than a moral straitjacket; it undoubtedly plays a more modest part than the political context in which the author operates. Focusing on Caesar’s life and Rome’s decisive passage from Republic to Empire, the author writes at a moment when the aristocracy of the seignorial courts of northern France undergoes an unprecedented crisis of status and property, in face of the growing authority of a Philip Augustus bent on achieving absolute power.³⁸ At the outset of his work, the author departs from his habitual reserve in using the personal pronoun “I” when comparing the Roman leader to the Capetian king, apparently in disfavor of the former. But the political message that he conveys through the portrait of Caesar is entirely ambiguous, hardly clarifying his position with regard to Philip Augustus.³⁹ Conversely, in his account of the Gallic War, he sides with the Gauls – his ancestors⁴⁰ – against Caesar in paying homage to their heroic figures, while the Normans and the Germanic tribes are spared no criticism.⁴¹ This outspoken “presentism,” the historian’s entry into history on the basis of his spatial, temporal, and epistemological position, suggests an acceptance of his here and now, a wish to utilize his knowledge of the past in order to explain the events of the present.⁴² Perhaps nothing more vividly evokes the ways in which history and literature can overlap than such contemporary configurations of prior “milieux,” whether the milieu is ancient Rome or – as discussed in later essays in this volume – Arthurian Britain (Chapters 5, 6, and 8), Carolingian France (Chapters 9 and 10), or early medieval Spain (Chapter 15).

Yet in spite of the interplay between past and present in *Prose 1* and the *Deeds of the Romans*, these works present themselves as historical texts by virtue of their form. Allied with the intention of truth that guides every historiographical project, prose, lauded by its enthusiasts for its “naturalness” and mimetic capacity, is the ideal guarantee of the scientific foundation of their accounts. It is considered the most appropriate means to solve the recurrent question of truth, since, preceding any alterations of form, it

may lend itself to transparent expression. With this postulate, however tendentious, the author of *Prose 1* relegates Benoît's romance to the domain of fable while legitimizing his "translation" from the Latin "by just account" because it reinvests the Trojan matter with its historical dimension. Prose is the only option for the compiler of the *Deeds of the Romans*, who translates the Latin authors without a vernacular intermediary, in continuing the recent *Ancient History down to Caesar*, so as to compose a history that claims to be the written monument of Caesar's past in all its transparency.

Writing Trojan and Roman times: the sense of history

Nevertheless, the technique of prose in the two works shows that writing history may not be reduced to a single practice. In its narrative dimension, it actually makes use of forms and figures belonging to fiction and potentially dangerous to its regime of truth.⁴³

In an epilogue that seems more like a manifesto, the author of *Troy*, as though conscious of the above threat, claims, by disowning verse, to reject the fiction that is consubstantial with it and to oppose to it a narrative that is rethought in line with a new grammar. He exploits the fresh narrative potentialities of prose that allow him to present the facts in a "staged" temporal perspective, as illustrated by the wide array of transitions in the text. In addition, these potentialities offer him the opportunity to display the various battle scenes and to capture the feelings of historical figures through the numerous complexly modulated speeches that pervade the textual space. Rewritten from Benoît or invented, such monologues and dialogues add a subjective dimension to the temporal and narrative axis while preserving the objective and historical status of the tale. This writer likewise benefits from the demonstrative resources of prose: the subordinate constructions that bind together narrative units in logical and causal relations.⁴⁴ Rejecting Benoît's visual and auditory aesthetics, which made the history of Troy into a flamboyant *geste*,⁴⁵ he denies himself all empathy with his subject, placing his reliance instead on distance and neutrality. He abridges the spectacular descriptions of buildings and objects,⁴⁶ which he restores to an auxiliary role in the narration, and divests the portraits of their hyperbolic aspect. In so doing, he invents a prose with a sober appearance that is diminished in its choice of vocabulary, remarkable for its "classicism" (as Guy Raynaud de Lage has called it),⁴⁷ and highly composite in its syntax. Long before the elaborate theoretical critiques of romance in early modern Italy (treated in [Chapters 12](#) and [13](#) of this study),

the practice of this thirteenth-century French writer implies a broader critique of imaginative discourse at large.

By devaluing the literality of verse texts, the author engages in a systematic attack on the worlds of both epic and romance. Even if, for lack of other means, he obtains his outline and motifs from the *chanson de geste* when describing battles, he always privileges realism over epic pomp, insisting rather on the character of programmed catastrophe than on the exploits of the heroes.⁴⁸ Similarly, he replaces the courtly ideal sung in romances with an uncomplimentary portrayal of women of the first rank, among whom is Helen. He shatters the Trojan imaginary shaped by Benoît through the fantasy of a prestigious Troy, at once a myth of origin and a myth of ideal civilization, and drains of its formative vocation and fascinating attraction a city that wields all power and all knowledge – a city that, in accordance with the choice of Helen, had succumbed to the flights of beauty and the forces of desire.

Introduced in the manner of glosses or interspersed in the fabric of the text, moralizations complete the historicizing of the Trojan matter and confirm the imposture of literature.⁴⁹ By putting such comments in prose, the author precludes the risk of confusing didactic verse and narrative verse, which led his predecessor in *Ancient History down to Caesar* to exclude them from the Trojan part of his work.⁵⁰ Founded on a rhetoric of preaching, with its proverbs, its argumentative mode, and its movements from the particular to the general and from the concrete to the abstract, these moralizations head every narrative sequence they are given the task of elucidating. Mostly based on the conditions of life in society, they unoriginally condemn the chaos of passions that is conducive to the development of vices and that those without God cannot overcome.⁵¹ Embedded in a divine causality and fraught with eschatological stakes, they also explain the meaning of Troy's ultimate eradication in a history oriented towards progress, and, in consequence, propose an ethics of action that would reestablish the harmonious bonds of society.⁵² This didactic vocation – nourished by the idea that God calls upon humanity to take an active part in the enterprise of everlasting re-creation that incomplete Creation calls for – explains the continual addresses to the lay Christian audience.⁵³

This audience of noblemen and (less often) of ladies accustomed to *chansons de geste* and romances is disabused of its heroic vision of past times. It is overwhelmed by a history stripped of the faded finery of fiction, in greater conformity with the demands of truth. It is stimulated by a moral teaching that compels the history to transcend itself and to find the

promises of Salvation in this world. Even if Trojan history thus remodeled and finalized gains a historical density, it none the less risks being dispossessed of it by the very message that in certain respects it does nothing but illustrate. In fact, following the initial principle of depicting and understanding a bygone world, the author of *Troy* unites the two undertakings around the notion of otherness: by writing history, he attempts to capture the otherness of Trojan time; by moralizing, he transposes his being and his world onto this otherness so as to give a meaning – a religious meaning – to difference.⁵⁴

Profiting from a literary void, as opposed to the author of *Troy*, who is burdened with Benoit's shadow, the compiler of the *Deeds of the Romans* opts for another procedure altogether: he chooses the background of epic and romance to welcome Roman history and to render it sensible and visible to his audience.⁵⁵ Fiction allows him to construct a narrative that, to borrow a phrase from André Burguière, is the "art of reconciling an emphasis on meaning with a fidelity to lived experience, the art of making something come alive and understanding it at the same time."⁵⁶ In a tale of conquest where battles abound, the author calls on the tried and true motifs of epic texts, at times even whole episodes that he amplifies or invents in accordance with his sources, without betraying their fundamental scheme of events. He submits to those motifs with a certain faithfulness, preserving the elements that structure them and the values that relate to them. In this very circumscribed framework, he sometimes slips in a few lines of verse even as he writes in prose, paying little heed to the rules or conventions of versification. Such instances include isolated verses, two or three consecutive verses, verses rhymed and unrhymed, as well as two stanzas that are well set off within the manuscript space.⁵⁷ He actualizes the combats in front of his audience, with the cadence and rhythm that are familiar to it.

The techniques of romance likewise serve him in drawing portraits, in reconstructing speeches, and in dramatizing situations – although he does not subordinate his work to these techniques.⁵⁸ Cleopatra's portrait, for example, though calqued in its layout and in its vocabulary on the prevailing norms of romance, does not answer the horizon of expectation that would have the beautiful double as the image of the good. On the contrary, it marries beauty to lust in order to work out the amorous relationship between Cleopatra and Caesar, close in their appetite for power and in their strategy for satisfying it.⁵⁹ The conventions of literature, which this author does not stop short of revisiting or transgressing, thus have a hermeneutic value.

More generally, it is the paralleling of epic and romance that helps him to differentiate the figures of history. In narrating the Gallic War, he represents Drappes Brenno, one of Caesar's fiercest adversaries, as an epic knight fighting for a collective cause, the liberty of his people. When he comes to narrate the Civil War, it is Domitius, Pompey's partisan and the great defender of liberty, who is depicted as such a knight. The craft of epic is reserved for historical personages bound to be defeated since they embody ideal yet outdated values. It is barred from Caesar, who is too pragmatic, in spite of his prowess, to be a new Roland, and who has more to him than the hero of a romance because of his problematic character. Nevertheless, by concluding with the image of Caesar's murder, the narrative puts in relief above all the contrasting features of his character, his combination of force and fragility; this end also releases him from the pure imaginary of epic and romance, and projects him onto the forefront of history.

Even if the vision of knights and ladies portrayed as medieval heroes and heroines smacks of a certain anachronism, this anachronism is wholly relative, a kind of subtle equation of antique and medieval realities whose goal is to open the audience to Roman otherness. Fiction proves, however paradoxically, to be an access road to this otherness by presenting it in terms of a different reality without masking it. Furthermore, the text touches upon several types of discourse that link the Roman past to the writing being carried out in the present, by means of comparisons or analogies such as lexical clarifications (the phrase "*franche garde*" [probation], p. 34), etymological digressions (p. 380), regional descriptions – especially of Gaul⁶⁰ – or encyclopedic mini-treatises (p. 225). The compiler's originality is his ability to turn all these related procedures into a constituent of the regime of historicity, a necessary link to truth and to the understanding of the facts with which these procedures are concerned.

Once it is properly understood, once it is mastered, fiction is indeed a source of revelation of the past for the readers or listeners, since it brings to light elements that, owing to disjunctions in culture, would have remained obscure or hidden from them. In this case, Roman history is quasi-fictional, inasmuch as its events are as if placed in front of the readers thanks to a narrative that compensates for the elusive character of the past by its vivacity and imaginary reconstruction. But if history is thus possessed by literature (as the title of an article by Régine Robin suggests),⁶¹ one should not conclude that it is also dispossessed. For fiction is anchored in Roman reality, that which is given by the Latin authorities, and since it is tied to the life of the readers, it unveils and uncovers it for them graphically.⁶² This combination of the marks of historicity and the

practices of fiction leads to an original text whose most fundamental contribution lies in opening up Roman otherness. Its compiler must have found the alchemically precise formula to make his work the absolute reference book on the life of Caesar up to the Renaissance, and to have it inspire both historical and literary compositions.⁶³

By their respective crafts, these texts harbor two divergent approaches to ancient times. Whereas the author of *Troy* envisions Trojan otherness through a paradigm of Christian reading and subjects it to moralization in a narrative devoted to edifying “*démonstration*,” the compiler of the *Deeds of the Romans* chooses to open himself to Roman otherness by reconstructing the past in the light of literature so as to capture it, to resuscitate it, and to convey it to his audience as an intelligible reality. The two texts, which avail themselves of learned discourse by means of a designated form and a determined textual construction, draw the divided figure of historians writing at the heart of their times and culture. They teach a poetics of history between knowledge and sensibility of the past, at the borders of morality and fiction.

III

*The matter of Britain: social and
spiritual drives*

*Inescapable history: Geoffrey of Monmouth's
History of the Kings of Britain and Arthurian
romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*

Robert W. Hanning

Among the many extended episodes in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (HRB) that achieved independent status in succeeding centuries – and, after the tale of King Arthur, the most famous, thanks to Shakespeare – is that of King Leir. Geoffrey ends his story of a foolish old monarch's betrayal by two daughters and redemption by a third with a striking detail (not reproduced in Shakespeare's play) that provides a usefully emblematic starting point for this essay: the tomb that Leir's daughter, Cordeilla, orders for him after his death. "She buried her father in a certain cave that she had constructed under the River Sor downstream from Leir-cestre. This cave was built in honor of two-faced Janus. There all the artisans of the city, when the solemn celebration of the god's feast day came around, would begin the projects that they were to complete during the year" (T. 86).¹

This almost bizarre conceit vividly symbolizes the link between looking backward, to memorialize a dead king in his tomb, and looking forward, to the next generation of the polity's creativity. A number of twelfth-century approaches to the interplay between entombment and artistry are considered earlier in this volume (Chapter 2), with reference to Geoffrey's contemporary historian William of Malmesbury and the early romances of antiquity. For his part, Geoffrey uses an image that suggests his sense of the historian's vocational responsibility to perceive and record the connections between what we might call the "buried past" and what comes after it – connections operative (but not always immediately visible) within the ceaseless tide of history, here represented by the river flowing above Leir's sepulcher. But Geoffrey's image can also serve (though not through its creator's intention) as a metaphor for the important role played by HRB within high medieval cultural production, not only as an influential (if fictive) monument to Britain's past, but as a central generative influence on the formation of the new, vernacular literary genre of chivalric romance that was to flourish in succeeding generations and centuries within western

Europe. The following pages will explore the relationship between Geoffrey's vision of history, specifically as it focuses on the reign of King Arthur, and the representation of socio-political and personal reality in three very diverse versions of romance: Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès*, Guillaume Le Clerc's *Fergus of Galloway*, and the anonymous *Mort le roi Artu*, the last constituent of the so-called "Vulgate Cycle" or "Lancelot-Grail Cycle."

Geoffrey of Monmouth has long been acknowledged (if also sometimes denigrated) as the creator of a largely fictional history of the Britons, and of their conquest by the Saxons, that exerted a widespread, centuries-long influence on English and European thought and historiography and was responsible for establishing, however inaccurately, the historicity of Arthur, Britain's greatest king, and the heroic/tragic narrative of his rise, reign, and fall. Within the last few decades, Galfridian scholarship has articulated a more sophisticated, and more generous, understanding of *HRB*'s manifold cultural importance: its presentation of (to paraphrase R. William Leckie, Jr.) the passage of insular dominion from Britons to Saxons, and by implication from Saxons to Normans, without significant explanatory recourse to a providential Christian theology of history; its serious (albeit fictionalized) meditation on contemporary political events and crises; and its implied commentary on the trials and opportunities of inter-ethnic relations, tensions, and influences in the many border contact zones of Geoffrey's Great Britain.²

HRB also figures significantly in the argument, made in recent years by some important scholarly and critical studies, against erecting too solid a boundary between history and romance, "fact" and "fiction," within high medieval European literate culture (both Latin and vernacular).

On the one hand, thanks to Nancy Partner and others, medieval historiography is now understood as rhetorical (i.e., both *persuasive* and *decorous*) in its essential strategies and aims, and inseparable from ideological programs, projects of ethnic and national construction, or the ambitions of particular groups seeking advancement or acceptance within an established (but never impermeable) social hierarchy, all of which require the construction of pasts that from our point of view can only be called fictional.³ On the other hand, self-conscious medieval courtly vernacular fiction-making cannot ultimately free itself (nor may it want to) from "history," however much it may disguise its bondage to past and present events – and interpretations of them – in narratives containing strong components of fantasy. In recent years Robert Stein and Francis

Ingledeu have offered persuasive theorizations of what they see as concerns shared, albeit differently articulated, between medieval historiography and romance. Stein's *Reality Fictions* argues that twelfth-century vernacular romance comes into existence to explain from individual-centered perspectives the new western European socio-political circumstances and crises, attendant upon Anglo-Norman and Capetian initiatives of centralized, bureaucratic state formation, which also preoccupied historians, many of them monks, writing in Latin. Ingledeu's "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" and *the Order of the Garter*, expanding on his influential 1994 essay on the "Book of Troy," insists that desire functions as the common force driving what we call history-writing and romance, basing this argument on an application to medieval secular narrative of the Augustinian understanding of desires that motivate the *civitas terrena*.⁴

Composed in the first tumultuous years after the death of Henry I in 1135, *HRB* engages, through the medium of a fictitious history of the kings of Britain, many of the often destabilizing political realities of Geoffrey's England, including the impact of Anglo-Norman state formation on the Anglo-Saxon, Welsh, and Scottish populations of Great Britain, and crises such as kin rivalries and generational tensions arising from power distribution within lineages; the strains within lord-vassal and king-baron relationships; and the attractions of centers of power for armed young men on the make and for others of relatively humble lineage but considerable skills of literacy whose goals and ideals vie with those of a warrior aristocracy.

I begin with those armed young men on the make. Georges Duby has famously brought to the attention of medievalists the important role played by the *juvenes* in the political and martial life of northwestern Europe during the centuries between the decline of Carolingian authority and the centralizing of power by kings and other great lords during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Younger sons of the greater or lesser nobility – but also first-born sons denied access to their inheritance by long-lived or distrustful fathers, and lower-born young men with ambition and martial skills – entered into various kinds of contractual relations with local lords and castellans, fighting for them in return for the promise of riches, lands, even well-born wives; or else roamed the land in groups, seeking booty from whatever quarter and in the process showing no respect for monasteries, churches, and peasant populations.⁵

As presented in *HRB*, the *juvenes* figure repeatedly, and centrally, in the armies of, and battles fought by, Britain's kings and those who would be king; they are a major source of energy and accomplishment that drives, but also complicates and deflects, the course of British history. Brutus, the

eponymous founder of Britain, is himself an archetypal *juvenis*, driven from his native land after accidentally killing his father in a hunting accident (a probable reference to the analogous death of William Rufus) and, thanks to his bravery and strategic skills, elevated to the leadership of a group of Trojans, living in subservience to a Greek king, Pandrasus, upon whom he happens in the course of his exile. Having led his new-found followers to victory, Brutus demands the hand of the king's daughter and sufficient ships and supplies to enable the Trojans' mass escape from their bondage. Forced to concur, Pandrasus recognizes the worth of his conqueror: "since such a young warrior [*juvenis*] has been able to oppose me so courageously, I give him my daughter Innogen" (T. 63).

Pandrasus is not the only monarch undone by *juvenes*. After Cordeilla, Leir's daughter and successor, has ruled Britain in peace for five years, her reign is threatened – and finally ended – by Marganus and Cunedagius, the sons of her two evil sisters. "Both young men [*juvenes*] were known for their remarkable courage"; raised to ducal status and "indignant at the fact that Britain was subjected to the rule of a woman," they "therefore assembled their armies and rose in rebellion against the Queen" (T. 86).⁶ The restless – and here politically disruptive – energy of the *juvenis* lives on in them even after their change in status.

Britain's greatest king, Arthur – who becomes king as "a young man [*iuvenis*] only fifteen years old, but of outstanding courage and generosity" (T. 212) – is eventually able to construct a continental empire largely because his lordly virtues of prowess (*probitas*) and generosity (*largitas*) attract to his service *juvenes* from all the lands he has previously conquered. "The young men [*juventus*] of all the islands which Arthur had subdued were there to fight at his side, and he was reported to have so powerful a force that it could hardly have been conquered by anyone" (T. 223). The impact of the martial energy and enthusiasm of the *juvenes*, along with its disruptive potential, finds graphic exemplification at the moment of confrontation between Arthur's army and that of the Roman Emperor Leo, who has demanded tribute from him. With the control of all Europe in the balance, Arthur sends an embassy to Lucius Hiberius, the Roman general, demanding that he withdraw or face the consequences. Included in the embassy is Arthur's young nephew, Gawain – a *juvenis* waiting to succeed to his father Lot's kingdom – a fact that excites all the king's *juvenes*, who are spoiling for a fight. "The young men [*juventus*] of Arthur's court were overjoyed at the prospect before them. They began to egg Gawain on to foment some incident in the Emperor's camp, to give them an opportunity of fighting with the Romans" (T. 241). Gawain obliges, and his hotheaded

provocation of the Romans (including killing one) turns an embassy meant to head off belligerence into the opening act of hostilities.

If the *juvenes* represented for Geoffrey, *par excellence*, the role of naked ambition and raw aggression within the political movements of his time and place, he was careful to include within his imaginary history of the Britons representations of more programmatic countervailing forces or strategies that he saw challenging, controlling, or productively channelling such impulses. Two examples are the socio-political strategies depicted, however hyperbolically, in the rituals and festivities of Arthur's court, and the skills embodied, however fancifully, in the activities of Merlin.

Arthur's conquest of all of Britain and its neighboring islands results in a twelve-year peace (W. 153/107), during which policies designed to restrain aggressive behavior come into play. While expanding his household (*familia*) by recruiting extremely valiant (*probissim[i]*) men from far afield, "he developed such a code of courtliness [*tantamque facetiam*] in his household that he inspired peoples living far away to imitate him" (T. 222); that is, Arthur's entourage began to practise a courtliness (*facetia*) which became a model to be imitated, with martial encounter deflected into a more peaceful, aestheticized form of competition.

The climactic account of this courtliness in action comes years later, at Arthur's triumphant crown-wearing at Pentecost (an Anglo-Norman royal ritual appropriated for the Britons by Geoffrey). The king summons all his foreign dependents to take part in an elaborate ritual celebrating not only the king's triumphs, his *largitas* and *probitas*, but also the fact that "by this time, Britain had reached such a standard of achievement that it excelled all other kingdoms in its general affluence, the richness of its accoutrements, and the courteous behavior [*facecia incolarum*] of its inhabitants" (T. 229). *HRB* here reflects the new levels of conspicuous luxury and stylized behavior that developed, as marks of "nobility," among the extended households of twelfth-century rulers whose power was generating previously unheard-of wealth – from conquest, from tolls exacted on expanding commerce, and from the agricultural yield of newly cleared arable land.

Even the practice of violence is, if not restrained, at least refined by the imposition of a dress code and, more fancifully, by being linked to another potentially disruptive impulse, erotic desire, in a manner that suggests domestication. "Every knight in the country who was in any way famed for his bravery wore livery and arms showing his own distinctive colour; and women of fashion often displayed the same colours. They scorned to give their love to any man who had not proved himself three times in

battle. In this way the womenfolk became chaste and more virtuous and for their love the knights were ever more daring" (T. 229: *Efficiebantur ergo caste et meliores et milites pro amore illarum probiores* [W. 157/112]). This "chivalry topos" (as I once called it) of mutually inspiring love and prowess was to have a long and distinguished career in the chivalric romances of the next several centuries.⁷

That leisure and dalliance at court served (at least in theory) as a brake on the belligerent propensities of *juvenes* is suggested by the worried comment of Cadur, Duke of Cornwall, at the council of barons that Arthur calls after receiving the demand that he pay tribute to Rome. Cadur welcomes this chance to engage Roman arms because he is "afraid that the life of ease which the Britons have been leading" for the last five years, "playing at dice, burning up their strength with women and indulging in other gratifications of that sort," will allow "their bravery, honour, courage and good name [to] become tainted with cowardice" (T. 231–32).

An extremely significant feature of the English court under Henry I was the growth of a bureaucracy that presided over the collection of taxes and the administration of justice, allowing Henry to centralize and consolidate his power over his barons and subjects.⁸ The members of this civil service were literate clerics, trained in cathedral and other schools, who chose royal administration as a career that promised advancement and other tangible rewards otherwise unavailable to them if (as was often the case) they were men (always men) of humble birth, or, as Orderic Vitalis famously put it, "men raised from the dust" by the King to fill these positions; in some cases such clerics attained an importance in the affairs of the kingdom much resented by the lineage-obsessed nobility.⁹ Linda Georgianna has called attention to several "bastards of Britain" in *HRB* who appear to represent, albeit fictively, these newly important royal servants.¹⁰ By far the most influential, and flamboyant, is Merlin – a man without a known father – whose prophetic gift seems a fictionally heightened version of the calculative and predictive skills necessary to those responsible for conducting the business of government, and whose supernatural ability to accomplish things that others (specifically fighting men) cannot suggests the inability of traditional warrior aristocratic values, by themselves, to accomplish the smooth running of the kind of centralized state Henry I attempted to create. This latter point is made obliquely, but emphatically, through the episode (W. 128–30/90–92) in which Merlin brings from Ireland to Britain a stone circle called *chorea gigantum* (the Giants' Dance) – we know it as Stonehenge – as a memorial to Britons massacred because of an earlier act of Saxon treachery. Aurelius Ambrosius, King of

the Britons, invades Ireland, and when his army finds the stone circle, they are challenged, almost sarcastically, by Merlin to “see whether skill [*ingenium*] can do more than brute strength, or strength more than skill, when it comes to dismantling these stones” (T. 197).¹¹ After they fail to budge the boulders, Merlin easily transports the circle to Salisbury Plain, erects it at Aurelius’ command around the graves “in exactly the same way as they had been arranged on Mount Killaraus in Ireland, thus proving that his skill [*ingenium*] was worth more than any brute strength” (T. 198).

The reconstitution of the stones as a perpetual recollection of the nation’s martyrs is the climax of a crown-wearing celebration that in turn culminates Aurelius’ renovation of Britain after ruinous Saxon attacks. The episode as a whole suggests the importance of a hallowed past in both constructing national identity and sponsoring national renewal; Aurelius rewards his *juvenes* and other followers with lands and fills empty bishoprics even as Merlin puts the perpetual mark of his *ingenium* on the landscape. This linkage between mortality and creativity – the past and the future – looks back to the moment in *HRB* with which I began this discussion: the tomb King Leir’s daughter, Cordeilla, has built for him after his death, in the shadow of which artisans begin their new projects on the first day of each year (the feast day of the god Janus). But the nexus also anticipates a subsequent episode presented by *HRB* as extremely crucial in the history of the Britons: the events that lead directly to the conception of Arthur, their greatest monarch (W. 137–38/97–98).

Uther Pendragon, successor to Aurelius Ambrosius, is smitten with an overpowering lust for Ygern, the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and declares war on the Duke for seeking to protect his wife from the royal embrace. The distraught king succeeds in having sex with Ygern when Merlin, whom he has summoned to his aid, uses his *novae artes* to transform Uther’s appearance into that of Gorlois, giving the royal rapist entry to the boudoir of his object of desire. Meanwhile, elsewhere Gorlois is dying in battle against Uther’s troops, enabling the king subsequently to marry Ygern, thus legitimating the son, Arthur, conceived during that first, illicit sexual encounter.

The episode, as Geoffrey constructs it, is a morally and politically problematic recasting of the theme sounded in the representations of renewal at Leir’s tomb and at Merlin’s installation of the Giants’ Dance as a war memorial. Uther is guilty of breaking his troth to his loyal vassal and, in violating Ygern, not only of a sexual crime but also of an unwarranted invasion of Gorlois’ private realm and possessions – in this case, his wife. Yet from this conjunction of lust and deception Ygern

“conceived Arthur, the most famous of men, who later earned renown for his great valor” (T. 207). I would argue that the episode can be read as a fictional, even cynical, meditation on Henry I’s achievement in exercising his centralized power, solidified by the efforts of his “men raised from the dust,” at the expense of the customary rights and autonomy of his barons. But Uther’s triumph also implies a recognition of the superiority of ratiocinative skills – figured as Merlin’s *novae artes* – over martial prowess in a quest for the attainment of personal desires.

One last element of the tale of Uther, Ygerna, and Gorlois deserves note: the motif of disguise so central to the success of Merlin’s scheme. It recalls an earlier, similar exercise of *ingenium* (adapted by Geoffrey from an episode in Book 11 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*) on the part of Dunwallo Molmutius, son of a king of Cornwall, who contests an alliance of two other local kings for control over the entire island of Britain (W. 34/23–24). In the midst of a battle, Dunwallo has six hundred of his *iuvenes audacissimos* don armor taken from dead enemies and, thus disguised, infiltrate his adversaries’ ranks and kill his rivals. Mission accomplished, Dunwallo and his troops withdraw quickly to shed their disguise, “for he was afraid of being attacked by his own men” (T. 89). The resort to *ingenium*, in other words, carries with it its own danger of being damaged by one’s own cleverness.

HRB underwent a wide range of appropriations and adaptations – in medieval terms, *translationes* – beginning almost immediately after it left Geoffrey of Monmouth’s hands. Of these, the one most of interest here is Robert Wace’s widely disseminated *Roman de Brut*,¹² an important medium for *HRB*’s influence on Francophone chivalric romances of the twelfth century. One interesting, oft-noted alteration by Wace is the insertion of a speech by Gawain in reply to Cador of Cornwall’s lament over the *otium* in which Briton warriors have lived during the preceding five years of military inactivity. Wace’s Cador specifically names the *juvenes* as harmed by idleness: “Much rest and idleness makes youth [*juvente*] give all its attention to jokes, pleasure, board games, and other amusing sports” (10748–51). Gawain answers at once that Cador has nothing to fear: “Peace is good after war and the land is the better and lovelier for it. Jokes are excellent and so are love affairs [*les drueries*]. It’s for love and their beloved that knights do knightly deeds” (10767–72). Wace has Gawain speak out, not only for the benefits of peace as a respite from war, but also for the pleasures of the non-belligerent activities that were features of court life precisely designed as alternatives to belligerence among the *juvenes* (and

their superiors). Indeed, Gawain suggests that the link between love and prowess associated with court life by Geoffrey has transformed both the goals and even the self-identity of the *juvenes*. They are now *chevaliers*: not just horsemen (the fundamental meaning of the word) but those whose activities (martial and otherwise?) – *chevaleries* – are inspired by the pleasures and attachments (including love) available during peacetime. This, by the way, seems to have been the understanding of the anonymous scribe who, in BN MS fr. 1450, sandwiched the romances of Chrétien de Troyes into his copy of Wace's *Brut* at the point where the text announces the twelve-year peace that followed Arthur's conquest of all the peoples of Britain and surrounding islands.¹³

Later, when Gawain participates in the embassy to the Roman army that will result in his fomenting combat, Wace describes the pressure put on him by "certain young knights . . . the most irresponsible ones" [*ces chevaliers, / ces bachelers (= juvenes), cez plus legiers*] to make sure that the threatened war in fact happens: "It would turn out badly, when each side had got so close to the other, if they never had the chance of a joust and separated so soon" (11677–78, 11685–88). In Wace's language, the battle sought sounds almost like a tournament, such as the one Arthur stages outside the city walls at his Pentecost crown-wearing.

Testifying to its lively interest in what Geoffrey calls Merlin's *ingenium*, Wace's adaptation goes beyond its model in having the magician/prophet mockingly lecture King Aurelius on the superiority of skill (*engin*, the French form) to might (*force*) when it comes to moving the Giants' Dance from Ireland to Britain, which the king doubts can be done: "King," answered Merlin, "then you don't know that skill surpasses strength. Might is good, skill better; skill prevails where might fails. Skill and art achieve many things which might doesn't dare to start. Skill can move the stones and through skill you can possess them" (8057–64).

By far the most complex, often brilliantly imaginative *translatio* of *HRB* in later twelfth- and early thirteenth-century cultural production is embodied in Arthurian chivalric romances. These Francophone narratives respond to, and depart from, the Galfridian "master narrative" – which a colleague once jokingly referred to as "one damned king after another" – by centering narrative attention on the adventures of well-born warriors other than Arthur, who set out from, visit, or attain final recognition at the royal court, but must face tests of their bravery in battle, their fidelity in love, and their capacity to make correct moral or pragmatic choices in trying, at once fantastic and culturally verisimilar, circumstances.

Chrétien de Troyes's romances respond to *HRB* in a *translatio* that takes many forms, of which the most provocative is to be found in *Cligès*, apparently his second exercise in this genre, which combines Galfridian elements with others drawn from the Tristan story, already popular among audiences of vernacular narrative fictions and elaborately developed some decades later by Gottfried von Strassburg (a version considered in the following chapter of this study).¹⁴ The story told in *Cligès*, across two generations of *juvenes*, father and son, suggests that we look for clues to understanding a complex world not just externally, in institutions and policies, but internally, in the motivations and intentions of the people who make decisions and control institutions. (Not coincidentally, the importance of intention in both the commission and absolution of sin was a major focus of discussion and debate in theorizations of the new sacrament of penance by Peter Abelard and other twelfth-century Christian thinkers.)¹⁵

Cligès follows Geoffrey in presenting Arthur's court as the exemplary goal of the *juvenis*. Two generations of protagonists in *Cligès* head for Arthur's court, for similar reasons but with very different strategies and outcomes. The experiences first of Alexandre, then of his son Cligès, represent Chrétien's most thorough meditation on the key role allotted to the *juvenes* in the military campaigns that shape political outcomes and structures throughout *HRB*. Alexandre, the older son of the Byzantine Emperor, having reached the age of eligibility for knighthood, looks abroad: "He had heard mention of King Arthur, who reigned in those days, and of the barons who always accompanied him, making his court feared and renowned throughout the world. Whatever might come of it, whatever might happen to him, nothing in the world could prevent his wanting to travel to Britain. . ." (64–75; K. 124).

So Alexandre sets off with twelve companions and abundant wealth; he wins Arthur's court over by the lavishness of his spending (reversing Geoffrey, where Arthur wins over his *juvenes* by *his* largesse), and assumes a starring role in the next Arthurian crisis, Chrétien's adaptation of Mordred's famous treason which, in *HRB*, leads to the king's demise in battle against the traitor. Count Angres, to whom Arthur has left the governance of England while he is abroad in Brittany, assumes rule of the realm. The king returns to punish the traitor, and the newly knighted Alexandre, full of the aggressive energy of the *juvenis*, incites his followers to anticipate Arthur's attack against Angres at Windsor by fording the Thames to attack some of the traitor's knights who are jousting beside the river. Chrétien here re-thinks the moment in *HRB*, already mentioned,

when Arthur's restless *juvenes* incite Gawain into beginning the king's war against the Romans. As a result of his prowess, Alexandre is rewarded by Arthur with a Welsh kingdom and five hundred knights – the *juvenis*'s dream come true.

Cligès, son of Alexandre and Sordamors, must also deal with Mordred-inspired betrayal, this time by Cligès' uncle, Alis, Alexandre's younger brother. Alis becomes emperor despite Alexandre's better claim as the elder – a fraternal conflict often repeated in *HRB*'s construction of British history – and then breaks his promise to Alexandre never to marry so that Cligès can inherit the throne. Alis' is a double treason, since the bride he chooses, Fenice, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor, has already been promised in marriage to the Duke of Saxony.¹⁶ Cligès, a *juvenis* in the household of his imperial uncle, fights several battles against the outraged Duke on Alis' behalf (and against his own interest). He then leaves home, following his father's advice, to win praise at Arthur's court – Geoffrey's *juvenis* theme again – but in this new generation he does so not by fighting against Arthur's enemies but by defeating the Round Table's best knights in a four-day tournament at which he arrives each day disguised in armor of a different color (a further reminiscence, and on Cligès' part a manipulation, of the sumptuary regime of *juvenes* and others at Arthur's court, where "every knight in the country who was in any way famed for his bravery wore livery and arms showing his own distinctive colour" [T. 229]).

These Galfridian-inflected adventures of two generations of *juvenes* are contrapuntally interwoven with *Tristan*-inspired themes, beginning with the incipient love affair between Alexandre and Sordamors, Gawain's beautiful sister. Each young person experiences the delights and distress of sexual desire, reported in long passages of inner debate and dialogue reflecting the twelfth century's interest in the Ovidian rhetorical heritage representing the rhizome of desire and motivation that lies hidden beneath human speech and behavior.¹⁷ In fact, the motif of disguise connects the two parts of Alexandre's adventures at Arthur's court, the valorous and the amorous, and the romance problematizes this strategy in both arenas.

In a battle before Windsor Castle, Alexandre sees Angres returning by a secret path to the safety of the castle, and there follows an adaptation of the *HRB* episode, already mentioned, in which Dunwallo snatches victory from stalemate by having his followers don armor taken from dead enemies. Alexandre and his retinue adopt the same strategy, which allows them to enter Windsor Castle and, eventually, to capture Angres. Meanwhile, Alexandre and Sordamors hide their feelings from each other,

prompted by fear of rejection and embarrassment: "Their love was constantly growing and increasing, but each was embarrassed in front of the other, and they hid and covered over so much that no flame or smoke appeared from the ember lying beneath the ashes." Chrétien adds, "Yet the heat was no less for all this, because heat lasts longer beneath the ashes than on top" (593–600; K. 130). That is, love disguised only grows in intensity. It's left to the queen, because of her greater experience a better interpreter of behavioral signs than either lover, to instruct them on the dangers of such disguise, which in war enables you to destroy your enemy, in love may have an equally lethal effect, but on the feelings of the person you least wish to hurt: "You are both behaving very foolishly in not revealing your thoughts, for by concealing them you will each be the death of the other, and murderers of love" (2260–63; K. 150). The parallel to this downside of disguise at the martial level is that the Greeks, when they find the armor Alexandre and his followers discarded in order to assume their disguise, mistakenly conclude that their companions are dead, and are reduced to great sorrow until the ruse is revealed to them.

Again in the next generation, disguised amorous emotions parallel disguised martial identities. Cligès recapitulates his father's strategy of disguise, donning the armor of a Saxon knight he has just killed in order to rescue Fenice from the Duke's followers and, having fallen in love with her, conceals his desire because of her betrothal to his uncle. His occluded feelings are a cause of suffering to Fenice, who has become enamored of her rescuer, even as Cligès' followers experience mistaken sorrow when they are fooled by his disguise into believing that he has died at the hands of the adversary he has actually defeated.

Disguise in another form results from the arrangement Fenice makes with her nurse, the magician Thessala, to have her husband, Alis, administered a potion on his wedding night that will cause him to dream of having sex with his new wife and delude him into thinking it's the real thing. In Chrétien's *inventio*, this strategy represents the confluence, and inversion, of the love potion in the Tristan story and Merlin's *medicamines* that allow Uther to delude Ygerna into thinking she is having sex with her husband while he rapes her and she conceives Arthur. The trick not only allows Fenice to avoid being stigmatized as a new Isolde (as she herself puts it); it also twists Geoffrey's Uther-Gorlois-Ygerna episode into a configuration where the cuckolded husband is not really cuckolded, but if he were he would deserve it because of his betrayal of his brother and nephew by marrying despite his promise not to.

This episode occupies a Janus-like place within the plot of *Cligès*. On the one hand, it looks backwards to connect Thessala's potion to the stratagems of disguise Cligès' father used to defeat the earlier traitor, Count Angres of Windsor. Chrétien makes the connection proleptically by means of the simile he uses to describe the effect on Alexandre's Greek companions of finding the shields that he and his immediate followers discarded in order to disguise themselves as Count Angres' warriors: "But just like someone who dreams and takes a lie for the truth, the embossed shields fooled them, making the lie seem true. They're deceived by the shields" (2073–76; K. 148). On the other hand, the potion that induces Alis' sexual befuddlement anticipates Thessala's later pharmaceutical manipulation that makes Fenice appear to die; from this false death she will arise, in accordance with her name, to live in secret with Cligès.

Both the tomb from which Fenice escapes and the tower in which the lovers pursue their amorous liaison are constructed by Cligès' serf, Jehan, through whose activities Chrétien achieves a provocative *translatio* of the interaction of endings and beginnings that *HRB* celebrates at Leir's tomb and at the Giants' Dance. Just as Geoffrey, in these two episodes, makes an implicit claim for the efficacy of his art in creating a usable past on which a brighter future might be erected, so Chrétien would appear to be praising his own art as, through its Merlin equivalents, Thessala and Jehan, it creates out of moribund dynastic history a new literary form based on personal skills and desires.¹⁸

But this paradigm of new life from old forms does not escape problematization in *Cligès*. By assimilating Fenice's stratagem to Christ's death and resurrection – including three torturing doctors from Salerno and soldiers who guard her tomb but fall asleep – Chrétien teasingly suggests that his magicians (and, by implication, Geoffrey's Merlin) are playing at being God.¹⁹ Furthermore, by having the lovers discovered in their Edenic love-paradise, despite all their precautions, the Champenois poet suggests their inevitable "fall" into history – a history that imposes limits on the fantasies of what we call romance, whatever the *ingenium* of its makers. In the later movement of romance the question of how erotic desire relates to historical destiny is a recurrent concern; subsequent chapters in this volume discuss some of its variegated expressions, from medieval Germany and England (Chapters 5 and 8) to early modern Italy and Spain (Chapters 10 and 15). In Chrétien's twelfth-century account of Cligès and Fenice, to be sure, the attempt of the lovers to impose the private imperatives of erotic desire on the public imperatives of imperial marriage arrangements succeeds in the short run, through the happy accident of Alis' death. However, one last act of

translatio reshapes their tale into an etiological (and therefore historical) myth: because of Cligès and Fenice, all subsequent Byzantine emperors have kept their empresses in strictest seclusion, and away from all men but eunuchs, lest they attempt similar deceptions. The imprisoned empress becomes, to paraphrase Patricia Parker, an emblem of inescapable history.²⁰

Guillaume le Clerc's early thirteenth-century romance, *Fergus*,²¹ offers yet another perspective on the Galfridian theme of the *juvenis* drawn to Arthur's court by its renown. *Fergus* begins with Arthur undertaking a hunt for a white stag, obviously borrowed from Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, accompanied by members of the Round Table equally on loan: Gawain, Yvain, Perceval (the latter riding "a very fine horse that he seized from the Scarlet Knight," in open reminiscence of a scene from Chrétien's *Le conte del Graal*). So many equally obvious references to Chrétien's *oeuvre* (and to continuations spawned by the unfinished *Conte del graal*) shine through incidents and characters throughout *Fergus* that ignoring Guillaume le Clerc's debt to the Champenois master is impossible. Chrétien provides for him the literary equivalent of a noble lineage's historical or pseudo-historical genealogy, and his *translatio Cristiani* parallels the creative appropriation of a classical *auctor*.

As part of that *translatio*, Guillaume integrates Chrétien's more or less timeless, or rather seasonal, Arthurian world into a more politically grounded conception of the great king of the Britons that owes its origin to *HRB*. Guillaume's modification of the Chrétienian stag hunt makes this clear. Whereas in *Erec* the hunt takes place in "the forest of adventures" [*La forest aventureuse*],²² which is thus coterminous with Chrétien's narrative world, in *Fergus* the stag leads those who hunt it on a breakneck chase (81–232) through Gorriende by Carlisle, Jedburgh, Lammermuir, Glasgow, Ayr, and Galloway, areas thus comprising part of the king's forest – where he (and presumably he alone, with his chosen barons) has the right to hunt – within a Scotland that reflects by its pacified nature the extended, climactic moment in *HRB* during which Arthur has successfully exerted his hegemony over the entire island of Britain.

Filling in a Galfridian gap, *Fergus* imagines the arrival of its *juvenis*-protagonist at the goal of his aspiration (or eros) – Arthur's court – as a mixture of kindness on Arthur's part, nastiness on Kay's, and forbearant instruction on the part of the court chamberlain, whose beautiful daughter offers the unpolished young man lodging for the night and manages to get rid of the two heads, hacked from robbers who assaulted Fergus on his way to court, that he had attached as trophies to his saddle (713–984).

Fergus leaves Arthur's court to find and defeat a Black Knight, whose behavior has damaged the reputation of the king and his court. He soon encounters the beautiful Galiene, whose subsequent disappearance bids fair to transform his quest to deserve a place at the Round Table into a love quest pure and simple. But as he seeks Galiene, Fergus also serves an Arthurian agenda of conquest and hegemony. His first series of adventures finds him defeating – and dispatching to Arthur at Carlisle – outlaw knights who prey on anyone who comes their way: one who lives in a tent guarded by a nasty dwarf; another in a tower by a river; a group of fifteen deep in a forest. By implication, all these malefactors threaten the king's peace, and thus his claim to the loyalty of his subjects; in neutralizing them, Fergus bolsters Arthur's political authority. Throughout these episodes, we see the presence of *HRB*, not as the literal source for any of Fergus' encounters, but as a text that, by its representation of a politically, because militarily, active Arthur inspires Guillaume le Clerc to inflect his Chrétien-derived protagonist as an agent of royal power. As later chapters in this study show, personal aspirations repeatedly intersect with political aims in the matter of Britain.

The latter part of *Fergus* concerns Fergus' liberation of Galiene from the predatory activities of an unnamed king who seeks to annex to himself the fief that the young woman has inherited from her father. Ultimately, Arthur brings about the wedding of Fergus and Galiene, makes the *juvenis* King of Lothian (Galiene's fief), and adds another county, Tweeddale, to his realm. Not only does this give Fergus the kind of reward that, as Georges Duby and, more recently, Sandra Hindman remind us,²³ all *juvenes* would most desire, but also, in keeping with the imprint of *HRB* on the romance, it brings Galiene's fief firmly under the king's control (and cements his lordship over southern Scotland), through Fergus' allegiance to him as a knight of the Round Table. Political considerations of a kind consonant with *HRB*'s portrait of Arthur are never far from the fictional surface, or the underlying assumptions, of Guillaume le Clerc's Scottish romance.

The preceding chapter of this volume has called attention to the power attributed to prose in the thirteenth century. The composition in prose of substantial texts on Arthurian themes during the first third of the century, and the linking of such narratives into a cycle of sorts, occasioned yet another *translatio* of *HRB* – this one a post-Galfridian return to pseudo-history – in the cycle's last constituent member, the *Mort le roi Artu* (hereafter *Mort*). Gabrielle Spiegel has argued persuasively that the early

thirteenth-century advent of vernacular prose historiography in northern France was no accident: "the turn to prose as the preferred medium of historical writing occurred in service to an ideological initiative on the part of a threatened elite to authenticate its claim to historical legitimacy . . . as the rise of a newly powerful monarchy threatened its traditional autonomy and sought to limit its exercise of traditional political and military roles."²⁴ The depiction in the *Mort* of the downfall of a great king after a break with his worthiest baron may well have "occurred in service" to such an "ideological initiative."

What is most striking about the *Mort's translatio* of the Arthurian section of *HRB* is that it combines two seemingly contradictory perspectives into a unified and powerful meditation on the tragic end, not only of that reign, but also of a way of life in which personal prowess, erotic desire, and the mutual obligations of a political system based on lordship can collaborate on a project of national well-being. On the one hand, the *Mort* links the end of the Arthurian era by implication to unavoidable senescence – Arthur, we are told, is now ninety-two, Gawain seventy-six, Lancelot a barely imaginable fifty-five, and Guinevere still a paragon of beauty at fifty²⁵ – and overtly to the uncontrollable, changeable activities of Fortune, who appears to Arthur in a dream, throwing him from the top of her wheel to his great injury (176/226–27).²⁶ On the other, it offers abundant evidence that Arthur's downfall results from inadequate institutions, fatal contradictions within them, and bad choices by those who control or personify them.

Of many details in the *Mort* that argue in favor of human ethical and political responsibility for events and their consequences, most relevant to this discussion are those which build upon two situations that I have been tracing from *HRB* to vernacular adventure narratives: (1) the arrival of the *juvenis/bachelor* at Arthur's court in search of battles and rewards, and (2) the strategy of disguise.

As the *Mort* begins, Arthur must decide what to do with his following of armed men – the *juvenes* and barons of Geoffrey's Arthur, here transformed into the knights of the Round Table – at a time when "*les aventures del roiaume de Logres estoient si menees a fin qu'il n'en avenoit mes nule se petit non*" [adventures had so declined in the kingdom of Logres that hardly any more took place anywhere] (3/3). The king (echoing the concern of Geoffrey's Cador of Cornwall) "*fist crier un tornoiement en la prairie de Wincestre, por ce qu'il ne vouloit pas toutevoies que si compaignon lessassent a porter armes*" [ordered a tournament to be announced at Winchester, because he nevertheless did not want his companions to cease wearing arms] (3/3).

Responding to the king's decision, Lancelot chooses to go to the tournament in disguise and, once there, to fight with the weaker side, comprising knights drawn from the kingdoms that Arthur has conquered. His choice initiates a train of unforeseen consequences that largely determine the tightly structured first part of the *Mort*. Fighting disguised as a *juvenis*, Lancelot is wounded by his cousin Bors. Even before this, while staying at the house of a vavasour in Escalot to avoid being recognized, Lancelot is tricked by the vavasour's beautiful daughter into wearing her sleeve on his armor as a sign that he is her champion. The sleeve fools Gawain into believing, and telling Guinevere, that Lancelot is in love with the maid of Escalot, and the queen's rage at her lover's supposed betrayal drives him back into the forest where he is again wounded. When Guinevere is subsequently accused of murdering a knight of the Round Table to whom she had inadvertently given a poisoned apple, Lancelot must conquer both physical and emotional injury to return (again in disguise) to the court in time to defeat her accuser in single combat.

Overshadowing this first part of the *Mort*, therefore, is the crucial importance of deliberate choice. If we are to believe Arthur (30/29), Lancelot chooses to go to the tournament in disguise in order to prevent others from refusing to fight him. Arthur, who nonetheless recognizes him before the tournament, chooses to keep his knowledge secret, giving the king a share of responsibility for the untoward results of Lancelot's masquerade as a *juvenis*. Lurking fatefully behind and, in effect, predicted by these foolish choices are others that will cost the protagonists their earthly happiness, and Arthurian civilization its very existence. The most fundamental, and most deadly, is Lancelot's decision to resume his adulterous, and thus treasonous, relationship with his liege lord's wife after forswearing it during the quest for the Holy Grail. For the affair to have any chance of success, however, it must be completely hidden, yet the lovers fail sufficiently to disguise their illicit passion (4/3; 85/107). Once revealed, the adultery causes a tidal wave of anger to inundate Arthur's fellowship: the king promises to wreak vengeance for his dishonor on his queen and his best knight, and Lancelot, while rescuing Guinevere from execution, accidentally kills Gawain's favorite brother, converting his closest friend to his most implacable enemy. This deadly sequence of actions and reactions anticipates the subsequent treason of Mordred, which, as in *HRB*, is made known to Arthur after his defeat of the Romans (163/210). Anticipates, but also enables: Arthur places his supposed nephew, but actually son, in authority over the kingdom and Guinevere (reunited with her husband through the agency of the Pope and self-sacrificing generosity

of her lover) when he leaves Logres, not to answer a Roman challenge – which comes only later – but to attack Lancelot in the latter's continental domain.

The complex effect on the reader of this double betrayal is central to the *Mort's translatio* of HRB. By its depiction of the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere, the *Mort* dramatizes a contradiction which (following but deepening the insight of Chrétien de Troyes in his *Chevalier de la charrete*) it finds in Geoffrey's idealized depiction of Arthurian courtliness, according to which the erotic relationship between knights and court ladies inspires the former to greater deeds of prowess and the latter to the chastity of faithful love. The problem with this paradigm is that the greatest knight should logically desire, and win, the most beautiful woman, but (also logically) this woman will already have been chosen by the king to be his wife.

Yet, although the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere renders Mordred's treason against Arthur something of an anticlimax, the son's attempt to seize his father's realm – the ultimate act of rebellion by a *juvenis*, after all – paradoxically makes it much easier for the reader to condemn him than the lovers, whose desire for each other co-exists, however uneasily, with admiration and love for the king. In effect, Mordred's villainy sucks most of the blame out the lovers' conduct – not legally, to be sure, or even morally (the text calls it both *desloiau* and a *pechié*), but affectively, that is, in terms of our sympathy for them, which I believe we are intended to feel even as we feel sympathy of a different sort for the cuckolded monarch. Over two hundred years later, Malory will offer his own expansive version of the legal, moral, and emotional complexities in this situation (see [Chapter 8](#)).

By suggesting that the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere is at once disloyal, lacking in malice, and deeply moving, the *Mort* is, I believe, asking its readers to qualify the dynastic concerns and legal norms of an historiography such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's with a more nuanced form of judgment that takes into account the intentions underlying our actions. That this is an important part of the text's message finds support in the episode of Guinevere's unintentional killing of Gaheris of Karaheu,²⁷ to whom she hands a poisoned fruit, intended (unbeknownst to her) by an enemy for Gawain (62/75–76).

As presented, this strange incident is ambiguously symbolic: by recalling Eve's primal sin in seducing Adam it seems to forecast, and to prejudice, Guinevere's analogous sin in cuckolding her husband; yet it also forces upon the reader the necessity of considering intention as a criterion in the

assignment of guilt, and thus punishment – not only here, perhaps, but later, with respect to Guinevere's (and Lancelot's) lack of intent to harm Arthur even as they betray him. In responding to Mador de la Porte's formal charge that the queen "*desloiaument et en traïson a ocis mon frere*" [dishonourably and treacherously killed my brother] (83/104), Lancelot avers that he is ready "*del deffendre qu'ele n'i pensa onques desloiauté ne traïson*" [to defend her and prove she never had dishonour or treachery in mind] (83/104), i.e., in her intention.

That Arthur's court (or any legal court) would respond to a calamity such as the death of Gaheris without considering motivation and intention on Guinevere's part challenges credibility. However, as a parable or exemplum of the necessity of taking such potentially mitigating factors into account, the episode conforms to contemporaneous theological and psychological interest in the discovery of motive or intent, and it encourages a less harsh judgment on Lancelot and Guinevere, especially vis-à-vis Mordred's malicious *desloiauté*.²⁸ Nonetheless, the *Mort*'s deeply disturbing image of love unintentionally causing great harm establishes it as the most profoundly unsettling, as well as the most humanly appealing, *translatio* of Geoffrey of Monmouth's achievement in creating Arthur as the most successful, and influential, monarch who never lived.

*Gottfried, Wolfram, and the Angevins:
history, genealogy, and fiction in the Tristan
and Parzival romances*

Adrian Stevens

Scholarship has had little of substance to say about the historical and political context within which Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* were written, but important new perspectives are beginning to be defined.

In his recent study of the German emperor Otto IV (c. 1175–1218), the historian Bernd Ulrich Hucker gives plausible reasons for assuming that Louis II, count of Loon and Rieneck, was one of Wolfram's joint feudal overlords.¹ Louis was an influential ally and supporter of Otto, and Otto, as the grandson of Henry II, was a member of the Angevin royal family. Wolfram makes Parzival an ancestor of the Angevin dynasty, and in the story of Loherangrin which concludes his romance he may be obliquely alluding to the marriage of Otto and Maria of Brabant in 1214.² This suggests the possibility that *Parzival* was read at Otto's court and at the courts of his supporters.

Otto's court and the courts of his allies and supporters are also the most likely settings for the performance of Gottfried's *Tristan*, which, like Wolfram's *Parzival*, has a strong Angevin affiliation. Patrick Sims-Williams has recently identified Thomas, the author of the Tristan romance which Gottfried took as his source, as the historical Thomas Brito, a clerk at the court of Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London from 1163 till 1187, who was the confessor and close political ally of Henry II.³ Thomas assimilates the Tristan story into the Angevin-oriented history of Britain invented by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, and Gottfried, remarkably for a German author writing for a German audience, incorporates and apparently even expands on Thomas's historical frame.⁴

The discussion which follows attempts to outline a case for viewing Wolfram's and Gottfried's romances as works likely to have had a special resonance in circles close to Otto IV, who not only was a member of the Angevin royal dynasty but also spent the years between 1182 and 1198 at the Angevin court in England and France.⁵ Otto is known to have taken a

keen interest in his complicated genealogy. Gervase of Tilbury, who wrote his *Otia imperialia* for the emperor, and who may have known him during his time at the Angevin court, devotes lengthy sections of his work to detailing Otto's ancestry,⁶ and Wolfram seems to have played on his and his audience's knowledge of Otto's dynastic affiliations in his text in ways calculated to link the emperor with the hero of his fiction.⁷

The Angevin kings of England took a keen interest in the matter of Britain, and recent French scholarship has suggested that they promoted themselves as the successors of Arthur.⁸ Henry II was sent to Bristol in 1142 to be educated at the court of his uncle, Robert of Gloucester, one of the men to whom Geoffrey of Monmouth dedicated his *Historia regum Britanniae*, which had begun to circulate by 1139.⁹ Henry studied Latin while in Bristol, and the chances are that he became acquainted with the *Historia* while he was under Robert's tutelage. Henry was crowned king of England in December 1154. The importance attached to Geoffrey's work by his court may be inferred from the fact that Wace finished the *Roman de Brut*, his vernacular adaptation of the *Historia*, in 1155, within a year of Henry's accession, and, according to Layamon, presented a copy of it to Eleanor of Aquitaine.¹⁰

The Arthurian history invented by Geoffrey and Wace, discussed in the [previous chapter](#), had an overtly political dimension. It sought to enhance the status of Britain by presenting it as the double and rival of Rome, while at the same time constructing a version of events designed to bolster Angevin interests by establishing the independence of the English crown from France. Wace notes that when Arthur conquered France after defeating its Roman governor Frolo in single combat, he marked his triumph by holding court in Paris, where he gave Anjou to his seneschal Kei, and Normandy to his cup-bearer Bedoer (*Roman de Brut*, 10147–60). Anjou and Normandy were Henry's key hereditary domains in France. If Arthur initially distributed them by right of conquest as royal fiefdoms of Britain long before Paris became the capital of the kings of France, it was at least arguable that Arthur's successors, including Henry II, were under no obligation to pay homage for them to the French crown.¹¹ Subsequent chapters of this study explore some of the implications of Arthurian history for political history in the late medieval and early modern periods.

Given the inherently pro-Angevin bias of the matter of Britain, it is hardly surprising that the cult of Arthur and the Arthurian age promoted by the historical fictions of Geoffrey and Wace was embraced by Henry's sons, Richard the Lionheart and King John. An inventory made in

1207 listed among John's regalia the sword that had reputedly belonged to Tristan, while Richard claimed to have in his possession Arthur's sword, Excalibur.¹² The importance of the swords was that they had a powerful representational function, defining Richard and John as the symbolic heirs of Arthur and Tristan respectively.¹³ Something of the value attached to them and to the Arthurian past figured in them emerges from the chronicler Roger of Howden's report that in 1191, while on the Third Crusade, Richard presented the supposed Excalibur to Tancred of Sicily in exchange for twenty ships to transport his troops to the Holy Land.¹⁴

All of this may seem very remote from Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, yet both romances exhibit a marked Angevin affiliation which scholarship has yet to explain. Gottfried's text provides an important clue. When Tristan is forced to flee from Cornwall to France after Mark discovers him sleeping with Isolde, he is told that there is "a great war in the land of Germany" [*daz grôz urluige wære / z'Almânje in dem lande*] (*Tristan*, 18444–45).¹⁵ He makes his way to Germany, allies himself with "the sceptre and the crown" [*dem zepter unde der crône*] (*Tristan*, 18450), and fights under the banner of the "Roman empire" [*ræmesch rîche*] (*Tristan*, 18451). No surviving twelfth-century Tristan text links Tristan with Germany, and Gottfried's formulations are best viewed as calculated pointers to the historical context within which his romance was written. The Roman empire for which Tristan fights in Germany can only be the Holy Roman Empire. If, as is generally assumed, Gottfried composed his romance around 1210, the "great war" of which he speaks must be an allusion to the long war of succession between Otto IV and Philip of Swabia that began with Otto's coronation in 1198 and dragged on until 1208, when Philip was assassinated. Finding themselves suddenly leaderless, his supporters accepted Otto as emperor, and he was crowned by Pope Innocent III in Rome in 1209.¹⁶ As Tristan's support for the emperor in Germany is flagrantly anachronistic within the otherwise scrupulously observed Arthurian time frame of Gottfried's romance, it is best read as a figure of the political, military, and financial support Otto received during and after the war from Richard the Lionheart and King John.

Their support was a family affair. Henry II had married their sister Matilda to Otto's father Henry the Lion, and the consequence of this union was that the Angevin kings of England became crucially involved in the internal politics of Germany.¹⁷ Otto, born in 1175 or 1176, spent the years between 1182 and 1196 at the Angevin court in England and France. In 1196 Richard the Lionheart made him count of Poitou and duke of

Aquitaine, and was instrumental in securing Otto's contested election as German king in 1198.¹⁸ When Richard died in 1199, his brother John continued the family alliance.¹⁹ His motives were not merely sentimental. Like Richard, John saw Otto as a valuable ally in the struggle against King Philip II for control of continental France. The Angevin alliance against Philip held until July 1214, when the armies of John and Otto and their northern French and Flemish allies were crushingly defeated at the battle of Bouvines.²⁰ The brutal consequence of the defeat was that Otto was deposed by the Pope, and John lost vast swathes of the territory in continental France that he had inherited from his father and brother.

Gottfried has never been reliably identified. Although it seems he came from Strassburg, clerks were socially mobile, and there is no evidence that he wrote his Tristan romance there. Whether he was a secular clerk at the episcopal court in Strassburg,²¹ or whether, as seems more likely, he was employed at the court of a supporter of Otto elsewhere in Germany, the internal textual evidence supports the hypothesis that Gottfried wrote at a pro-Angevin court. His source, the Anglo-Norman Tristan romance written c. 1170 by Thomas, has an obvious Angevin bias. Thomas was apparently Thomas Brito, a clerk in the service of Gilbert Foliot,²² a loyal supporter of Henry II who was appointed bishop of London in 1163 at Henry's instigation.²³ Foliot, who was acquainted with the circle of men close to Geoffrey of Monmouth, used the *Historia regum Britanniae* for his own political ends, citing it in support of his publicly declared ambition at the time of the confrontation between Henry II and Thomas Becket to have London designated a metropolitan see in place of Canterbury.²⁴ Thomas writes London and its bishop into his romance in a way which has no parallel in any of the other twelfth-century Tristan texts. He makes room for a lengthy eulogy of the city and its inhabitants (2801–13); the council of state summoned by Mark to consider the allegation of adultery against Isolde meets in London; and when the council is convened, it is the bishop of London who assumes the legal role of Mark's spokesman, formally makes the complaint against Isolde on behalf of the king, and invites her to defend herself.

All of this happens within the immediately post-Arthurian period of British history. One of the clear and consistent aims of Thomas's Tristan romance is to foreground Tristan as the heroic double of Arthur, and to this end it draws heavily on Wace's *Roman de Brut* as an intertext. Thomas interpolates into his romance two of the episodes in the *Roman de Brut* in which Arthur is shown slaying giants. The function of these interpolations is to establish a parallel between Tristan and Wace's Arthur, and to portray

Tristan as Arthur's symbolic heir by having him reprise Arthur's feats as a giant-killer.²⁵ But on the evidence of *Tristrams saga*, the Old Norse adaptation of his text, Thomas also inserted Mark and Tristan in a more literal way into Wace's (and Geoffrey's) account of British history. *Tristrams saga* notes that Mark "was the sole lord and ruler over all the English and the men of Cornwall."²⁶ Wace puts this into a broader context. His story is that the Saxons, warring against the native British, ask Gurmunt, the king of Ireland, for help. Gurmunt comes to Britain, conquers it, gives it to the Saxons, and obligingly departs. The Saxons mark this translation of empire by calling Britain England, and themselves English; but they have no crowned king, and fall into a series of petty wars among themselves (*Brut*, 13663–76). Gottfried, almost certainly taking his cue from Thomas, elaborates on Wace, noting that eventually the Saxon conquerors, tired of killing one another, "entrusted themselves and the country to Mark's care" (*Tristan*, 444–45). It would seem that Thomas expanded Wace's account by inserting Mark into it, and that Gottfried followed him in rewriting the received version of British history, making Mark the hereditary king of Cornwall, and the elected king of Saxon England (*Tristan*, 425–27).

This involved further significant rewriting of Wace's (and Geoffrey's) story. Gottfried's Gurmunt is not invited to Britain by the Saxons, nor does he simply abandon the country to them after he has conquered it. Instead, he retains the de facto lordship over England and Cornwall, and makes the infant Mark into a subject king who is obliged to pay him tribute (*Tristan*, 5924–30). But Gurmunt is himself a client king. His lands are under the jurisdiction of the Roman Senate, and he obliges England and Cornwall to send envoys to Rome every five years to pay tribute and to be instructed by the Senate as to what laws they must implement. The consequence is that Mark's kingdoms are "subject to Rome" [*undertân ze Rôme*] (*Tristan*, 5991), and that the giant-like Morolt, Gurmunt's representative and champion at Mark's court, symbolizes not only Ireland's, but Rome's authority over Britain. When Tristan kills Morolt in single combat, he is liberating Mark's kingdoms both from Gurmunt and Ireland, and from Rome, and so translating empire to Cornwall, England, and Mark, the unheroic king who, unlike Arthur and Arthur's symbolic heir Tristan, fails to fight for them. The translation of empire effected by Tristan in Gottfried's work acquires other forms in a range of texts, as romance passes from the medieval to the early modern period (see [Chapters 2, 6, 10, and 14](#)).

In liberating Britain from Rome's claim to dominion over it, Tristan is again imitating Arthur, whose greatest feat in the *Roman de Brut* is to

conquer the Roman emperor Lucius in battle, and so put an end to Rome's claim to sovereignty over Britain. There are clear intertextual parallels, doubtless mediated by Thomas, between Tristan's rebuttal in Gottfried of Morolt's claim to tribute from England and Cornwall and Arthur's rejection in the *Roman de Brut* of Rome's claim to tribute from Britain; and Gottfried's description of how Tristan returns Morolt's corpse to Dublin (*Tristan*, 7090–199) echoes Wace's description of how Arthur returns Lucius' corpse to Rome (*Roman de Brut*, 12977–94). The refusal to pay tribute, the resort to trial by combat, and the return of the bodies to Rome and Dublin respectively represent a symbolic termination of Rome's claim to empire.

Why this interest on the part of Thomas and Gottfried in accommodating the Tristan story to the history of Britain as recorded in the *Roman de Brut*? In his seminal study of the writing of genealogies in twelfth-century France, Georges Duby notes that the ancestors from whom noble families traced their descent created not only a heritage of political power, but a legacy of honor which their descendants and successors felt themselves bound to perpetuate.²⁷ By writing Mark into the received history of Britain as recorded by the *Roman de Brut*, and by making Tristan Mark's nephew and designated heir, Gottfried was following Thomas in linking Tristan with the royal dynasty of Britain, and therefore by implication with the Angevins. The link between Tristan and the Angevins is, of course, a fiction, but as Duby has shown, fiction played an accepted part in narrative genealogies at the time Thomas and Gottfried were writing.²⁸ The more ambitious genealogies traced the origins of noble families back to a remote, often legendary or mythical past, and drew on a variety of genres such as history, hagiography, *chansons de geste*, and romance in order to present a flattering account of the ancestors as exemplary figures whose character and actions conferred distinction, and sometimes even a glamorous notoriety, on the ruling dynasty.²⁹ Long after the Middle Ages, dynasties continue to be provided with illustrious genealogies of this kind in romance (see [Chapters 10](#) and [14](#)).

That Otto took a personal interest in his Angevin ancestry and the history of Britain is certain. Gervase of Tilbury, who may have known Otto as a boy at Henry II's court, and who wrote his *Otia imperialia* or "Recreation for an emperor" for him, included in it a detailed summary of the *Historia regum Britanniae* (*Otia*, 11.17, pp. 397–435). Gervase, who addresses his narrative to Otto personally, reminds him at elaborate length of his genealogical stake in the history of Britain, referring to the Britons as the people "from whom you trace your descent, venerable Prince, on your

mother's side" [*per matrem (. . .) originem ducis*] (*Otia*, 1.23, pp. 146–47). He points out that the "empire of the Romans" over which Otto "holds dominion" [*imperium Romanorum cuius tenes dominacionem*] and "the kingdom of Great Britain whose womb gave you birth" [*regnumque maioris Britannie ex cuius utero prodiisti*], "your mother being the daughter of the illustrious Henry, king of the English" [*matre tua illustrisimi Henrici regis Anglorum uetustioris filia*], arose from the destruction of Troy (*Otia*, 11.16, pp. 396–97).

This is political and personal flattery of a high order. Gervase's purpose in citing the fall of Troy is to invoke the principle of the translation of empire: as the ruler of "the Roman empire restored by Charlemagne" [*a Carolo Magno Romanum reintegratum imperium*] (*Otia*, 11.18, pp. 436–37), Otto is the successor of Aeneas, the Trojan who founded Rome; and as the Roman emperor who is the son of Henry II's daughter, and in that sense British by birth, he can number himself also among the successors of Aeneas' great-grandson Brutus, the founder, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, of the kingdom of Britain. Gervase refers to the story of the founding of Britain by Brutus on no fewer than four separate occasions, and Gottfried too makes an oblique allusion to it when he records that the cave of lovers, in which Tristan and Isolde experience their epiphany, had been "hewn from a mountain a long time in the past, under heathen law, before the time of Corineus, when giants were lords there [i.e. in Britain]" [*under der heidenischen ê / vor Corinêis jâren, / dô risen dâ hêrren wâren*] (*Tristan*, 16694–96).

In the *Historia regum Britanniae* and the *Roman de Brut*, Corineus is the most prominent of the Trojans who accompany Brutus to Britain, and he plays a particularly glorious part in conquering it from the giants who are its first rulers. It is when Corineus kills their lord Gogmagog that power is translated from the giants to the Trojans. Brutus marks this translation of empire by changing the country's name from Albion to Britain, and calling the Trojans Britons, after his own name Brutus.³⁰ As Gottfried makes no attempt to explain who Corineus was, the assumption must be that he expected his audience to be familiar with the history of Britain as recorded by Geoffrey and Wace. Otto's is the only court in early thirteenth-century Germany which is likely to have had the detailed knowledge of (and interest in) British history which the oblique reference to Corineus in *Tristan* presupposes.

Gottfried creates his own fictionalized variation on the received account of British history provided by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace in which the translation of empire in Britain is interwoven with a translation of love. The symbolic site of that translation is the cave dedicated to, and named

after, Love [*der Minnen benant*] (*Tristan*, 16999).³¹ The first age in Gottfried's history of Love is the "heathen" age of the giants [*under der heidenischen ê*] (*Tristan*, 16690) who ruled "before the time of Corineus" [*vor Corinêis jâren*] (*Tristan*, 16691). With the ending of the "heathen" rule of the giants by Corineus, the lordship of Britain (and thus of the cave) passes to Brutus and so to the dynasty of Aeneas, Brutus' great-grandfather. In the age inaugurated by Brutus with the help of Corineus, Britain becomes the genealogical double of Rome, and the cave is the symbolic home of Phyllis of Thrace, Canace, Biblis, and Dido (*Tristan*, 17182–97), heroines of the Roman poets Ovid and Virgil. But when Tristan translates power in Britain to Mark from the dynasty of Aeneas, the lovers of Ovid and Virgil are themselves succeeded and superseded in the cave by Tristan and Isolde. The third age of Love now begins, recorded fittingly in German, the vernacular of the modern imperial court. Gottfried invents his own secular variation on the traditional Christian division of human history into three ages: the age "before the [Mosaic] law" (*ante legem*); the age "under" that law (*sub lege*); and the age of "grace" (*sub gratia*), which begins with the Incarnation. The giants of the first age live "under heathen law." The heroines of Ovid and Virgil live under the second age of Roman law, the age associated with Aeneas as the founder of the ruling dynasties in Rome and Britain. With Tristan and Isolde, the third and present age of love, the secular age of grace, begins.³² Gottfried is insistent: it is only in the third age of British history, the age inaugurated politically by Tristan's slaying of Morolt, that love is "fulfilled" or "brought to completion" [*bewæret*] (*Tristan*, 17228) in the cave by Tristan and Isolde. The story of the cave as Gottfried rewrites it reveals itself as fiction with a subtle genealogical connotation. To the extent that Otto's royal Angevin ancestry makes him a successor of Tristan, it tacitly presents him as the successor of one of the noblest of British heroes and also as the heir to the man who is Love's paradigmatic lover.

In the *Otia imperialia* Gervase reminds Otto in a more prosaic way that empire in Britain was translated from Brutus' Britons with "the coming from Germany of the English, called Saxons at that time." Gervase pointedly flatters Otto by stressing both his Saxon and British English heritage: "from their stock you, most serene Prince, are descended on both sides: for your father was the illustrious Henry, duke of Saxony, while your maternal grandfather was the most illustrious Henry, king of the English." As well as summarizing the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Gervase undertakes to relate "the succession of the kings of England, in order that Your Imperial Majesty may be able to recall how England's connection with

the empire and the kingdom of France came about, and in what circumstances the kings of England, together with the English themselves, issued from your own Saxony."³³ Gervase concludes his genealogical tour of the royal dynasties to which Otto can trace his descent by writing a history of the kings of Germany who became Roman emperors after Charlemagne, ending, of course, with Otto himself (*Otia*, II.19, pp. 454–71), and finally recording the succession of the Norman and Angevin kings of England from William the Conqueror to Otto's uncle King John (*Otia*, II.21, pp. 475–91). The importance Gervase attaches to Otto's complex genealogy and to detailing the emperor's dynastic stake in early Britain, and in Saxon, Norman, and Angevin England, not to mention Germany, shows the potential attractions for Otto and his court of a German romance which rewrote the history of Britain in a way which made Tristan a forebear both of Otto himself and of Otto's uncle and ally King John who, in claiming to be the possessor of Tristan's sword, was promoting himself symbolically as his successor.

Wolfram's *Parzival*, no less than Gottfried's *Tristan*, demands to be situated within the political and cultural context of the Angevin court. Louis II, the count of Loon and Rieneck who seems to have been Wolfram's joint feudal overlord,³⁴ played a considerable part in the tangled and frequently hostile relations between France, the German empire, the Low Countries which bordered them, and Angevin England. In April 1213, for example, he arranged a great tournament at St. Trond near Maastricht for nobles from France, Germany, and the Low Countries at which Otto presided, and which was clearly designed to promote his cause. In October of the same year he joined forces with the bishop of Liège to defeat the army of Duke Henry I of Brabant, then allied to Philip of France. In the aftermath of his defeat, Henry of Brabant was obliged to transfer his allegiance from Philip to Otto, and at Bouvines he fought on the side of Otto and King John. Shortly before that, in May 1214, with the evident intention of cementing his alliance with the Angevins, Henry had married his daughter Maria to Otto at Maastricht. Louis of Loon and Rieneck seems to have been present at the ceremony, and there are good reasons for believing that the story of the swan knight Loherangrin with which Wolfram concludes his romance may have been written with the union of Otto and Maria of Brabant in mind.³⁵

Wolfram, in a radical departure from Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, makes Parzival and his half-brother Feirefiz into members of the Angevin royal dynasty through their father Gahmuret.³⁶ Before Gahmuret deserts

Feirefiz's mother, Belacane, he writes in his own hand a genealogy of the Angevin male line. Gahmuret names their earliest ancestor as a certain Mazadan, whose union with the fairy Terdelaschoye produced two sons who founded the Angevin and Arthurian dynasties respectively. The Angevin lineage descends through Mazadan's son Lazaliez, who is Gahmuret's great-grandfather, while the Arthurian line descends through Mazadan's other son, Brickus, who is the father of Utependragun, and grandfather of Arthur (*Parzival*, 56.1–26).³⁷ Uther Pendragon and Arthur are "historical" figures in that they are prominent in the histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, but Gahmuret's genealogy is otherwise pure fiction. Yet Gahmuret's purpose in detailing his Angevin lineage and its Arthurian affiliation is entirely serious: it is to demonstrate its high nobility, and to show that any son of his by Belacane will be born into the royal house of Anjou [*erst erborn von Anschouwe*] (*Parzival*, 56.1). Gahmuret's father, Gandin, and his older brother, Galoes, are introduced at the beginning of book 1 of *Parzival* as kings of Anjou. Galoes becomes king by right of primogeniture when Gandin dies, but as he has no son to succeed him, he insists that Gahmuret should use the style and title "Gahmuret Anschevîn" (*Parzival*, 6.26). "Anschevîn" is a patronymic. It designates Anjou as the ancestral family territory handed down by succession through the males of the Angevin royal lineage,³⁸ and it symbolizes Gahmuret's right, because he is born "of Anjou," to be accepted as Galoes' legitimate heir. When Galoes dies leaving no son, Gahmuret duly succeeds him as king, and Parzival in turn inherits Anjou from Gahmuret. On assuming the kingship of the Grail, one of Parzival's first public acts is to secure the dynastic succession in Anjou and the other kingdoms he holds by transferring them with the consent of his principal vassals to his infant son, Kardeiz, who is crowned as his heir (*Parzival*, 803.2–23). Just how profoundly the biopolitics of lineage shape the self-understanding of Parzival and his half-brother, Feirefiz, emerges in their dramatic encounter in book xv, when Feirefiz identifies himself to Parzival as "Feirefiz Anschevîn" (*Parzival*, 745.28). By using the royal patronymic "Anschevîn," as Gahmuret's genealogy entitles him to do, Feirefiz is asserting that he is of the lineage of Anjou, and the principle of primogeniture means that he, not Parzival, is the rightful heir to the ancestral domain. Parzival, still unaware that Feirefiz is his elder brother, is quick to question his entitlement to style himself "Anschevîn," and to insist that he is the legitimate successor to Anjou. "How can you be of Anjou? Anjou is mine by inheritance, its castles, lands and cities" [*wà von sît ir ein Anschevîn? / Anschouwe ist von erbe mîn, / bürge, lant unde stete*] (*Parzival*, 746.3–5). Fratricidal

conflict is avoided by Feirefiz's magnanimity. Not only does he not press his claim to Anjou, but he even offers to give Parzival the kingdoms of Zazamanc and Azagouc which he has inherited from their father (*Parzival*, 750.14–19).

When Parzival tells Feirefiz that Gahmuret is dead, he breaks the news in the form of a eulogy based on accounts of their father he has heard from those who knew him: "people tell me of his noble deeds, I have heard of them from many sources" [*man sagt mir guotiu werc von im / an maneger stat ich diu vernim*] (*Parzival*, 751.3–4). Parzival's informants are unanimous in acknowledging Gahmuret's fame, praising his bravery and virtue, and extolling his death in a joust fought outside Baghdad in the service of love (*Parzival*, 751.5–30). In citing the testimonies of his father's contemporaries, Parzival is not simply performing an act of filial piety. He is celebrating the magic of nobility which defines the ideology of lineage, invoking the special virtue by which he and Feirefiz live, a virtue which is theirs by inheritance because they are of Gahmuret's blood. Feirefiz responds to his brother's eulogy in terms that make it obvious that the idea of what he calls "the bond of lineage between a father and his children" [*sippe (. . .) zwischen vater und des kinden*] (*Parzival*, 752.12–13) is fundamental to his sense of self. His language expresses the conviction that he and Parzival, because they are Gahmuret's sons, are one and the same, identical in the nobility of attitude and behavior which is theirs by virtue of the nobility of inheritance (*Parzival*, 752.15–19), and bound by it to emulate their father and try to make themselves as worthy of remembrance as he is.³⁹

The fact that the ideology of lineage attributes to the memory of illustrious ancestors the capacity to determine the present of their successors is of crucial importance to a proper historical understanding of Wolfram's romance. The fiction that Gahmuret, his sons, and their descendants are Angevins of the royal line is consistently maintained, and Wolfram goes out of his way in his epilogue to emphasize the cardinal importance of genealogy to his narrative. After criticizing "master Chretien of Troyes" [*von Troys meister Cristjân*] (*Parzival*, 827.1) for his failure to emulate the Provençal Kyot by telling the Grail story from start to finish, Wolfram congratulates himself on having detailed Parzival's genealogy and "correctly named" for the benefit of his audience Parzival's "children and his high lineage" [*siniu kint, sîn hôch geslehte / hân ich iuch benennet rehte*] (*Parzival*, 827.15–18). The clear inference is that Parzival's genealogy is crucial to the proper presentation and understanding of the Grail story, and that Chrétien was remiss in not detailing it in the way Wolfram himself does.⁴⁰

According to Wolfram's fictional genealogy, Parzival becomes a member of the Grail dynasty and eventually Grail king by virtue of Gahmuret's marriage to Herzeloide, the sister of the Grail king Anfortas. Loherangrin, one of Parzival's twin sons, has been chosen by God as heir to the Grail. As Loherangrin is an Angevin by lineage, he can be numbered among Otto's ancestors.⁴¹ Moreover, Loherangrin does what Otto himself will do generations later: he marries a woman who, as a "princess of Brabant" [*fürstin in Brabant*] (*Parzival*, 824.27), can be numbered among the ancestors of the historical Maria of Brabant. The fictional union of the Grail and Angevin dynasties with the dynasty of Brabant in *Parzival* can be read as a symbolic foreshadowing of the historical union of the houses of Anjou and Brabant brought about by Otto's marriage to Maria in May 1214.⁴² And there is more: Maria of Brabant could claim descent from the swan knight through Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lower Lorraine, who in 1099 became the first ruler of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem.⁴³ Godfrey declined the kingship, opting instead for the title of "Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri." But when he died in 1100, his brother Baldwin, who succeeded him, did accept the title of king of Jerusalem. Both William of Tyre, in his history of the kingdom of Jerusalem, written in the early 1180s, and Lambert of Ardres, in his *History of the Counts of Guines*, written a decade or so later, refer to the story that Godfrey of Bouillon was descended from a swan knight.⁴⁴ The genealogical connection between Maria of Brabant, Godfrey, and King Baldwin I of Jerusalem was that Maria was the great-granddaughter of Godfrey's and Baldwin's brother Eustace of Boulogne. She could therefore regard herself both as a descendant of the swan knight and as a member of the dynasty that had founded the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁴⁵ Complex as this genealogical affiliation is, it is further complicated by the fact that Otto, like Maria, could claim descent from the kings of Jerusalem through his Angevin ancestry. His great-great-grandfather, Count Fulk V of Anjou (the grandfather of Henry II), was crowned king of Jerusalem in 1131 in succession to Baldwin II, and reigned until 1143.⁴⁶

Although the Grail kingdom is nowhere explicitly linked in Wolfram's text with the historical kingdom of Jerusalem, there are several carefully contrived parallels between them. Both are protected by orders of temple knights. The real Templars were founded in 1118 by Hugh of Payens, who persuaded King Baldwin I to allow him to install himself and a few companions in the part of the royal palace that had once been the area of Solomon's Temple, from which they took their name. Wolfram uses the neologism *templeis*, derived from Old French *templier* or Latin *templarius*, to refer to his temple knights in a way calculated to connect them with

their historical counterparts. The real Templars were sworn to help and protect pilgrims going to Jerusalem and other sites of special significance to Christians. The Grail castle to which Wolfram's *templeisen* escort Parzival and his brother Feirefiz (*Parzival*, 793.3–30) resembles the king's palace in twelfth-century Jerusalem in that it contains a temple.⁴⁷ The temple [*tempel*] (816.15) in *Parzival* is both the repository of the Grail and the place where Feirefiz is baptized into the Christian faith; and the baptism, which permits Feirefiz to see the Grail for the first time, takes place in the presence of Wolfram's templars (*Parzival*, 816.16–19).⁴⁸ It is by divine dispensation that Feirefiz is allowed into the Grail castle and its temple. Cundrie, the Grail messenger, informs Parzival that he has the right to choose a male companion to accompany him on his return to the castle, and his choice falls on his half-brother. When Feirefiz arrives in the Grail castle, he promptly and comically falls in love with Repanse de Schoye, the bearer of the Grail, who is the sister of Parzival's mother, Herzeloyde, and of Anfortas, the wounded Grail king whom Parzival cures and then succeeds. Feirefiz consents to be baptized only because he so desperately desires his father's sister-in-law, and the Grail bearer cannot surrender her virginity unless she marries a Christian. God moves in *Parzival* in mysterious ways. Not only is Feirefiz seemingly permitted to marry his half-brother's aunt by divine dispensation, but the son of his union with the Grail bearer is none other than Prester John [*priester Jôhan*] (*Parzival*, 822.25), the progenitor of a dynasty of Christian rulers of India, all of whom, according to Wolfram, take the name Prester John after their founder (*Parzival*, 822.25–27), Parzival's nephew.⁴⁹ When Feirefiz makes his journey to the west in search of his father, Gahmuret, and his Angevin inheritance, he is already king of India by virtue of his marriage to the Indian queen Secundille (*Parzival*, 822.8–823.2). Secundille conveniently dies, leaving Feirefiz free to return to India with her replacement, Repanse de Schoye. It is in India that Repanse de Schoye gives birth to Prester John. The Indian dynasty founded by Prester John unites, again seemingly by divine dispensation, the Grail dynasty to which he belongs through his mother, and the Angevin dynasty into which he is born through his father, Feirefiz, and his grandfather, Gahmuret.

In the genealogies of Grail romance there are various concepts of a visionary future (see [Chapter 6](#)), but at this point in *Parzival* genealogical fiction, however fabulous, intersects with what, for Wolfram and his audience, may have been present history. News of the existence of a dynasty of Christian kings in India reached the west in the form of a letter purportedly written by a descendant of the first Prester John (according to

Parzival the son of Feirefiz) to the emperor Manuel I of Byzantium, who reigned from 1144 to 1180.⁵⁰ This letter, widely circulated during the latter years of the twelfth century, is a forgery, but it was generally believed at the time to be genuine. Its description of the wonders of Prester John's eastern kingdom bears a resemblance to the description of the wonders of the Grail in *Parzival* that is so close as to make it clear that Wolfram used it as an intertext, and that he did so on the assumption that his audience would be familiar enough with its contents to discern the tacit but pointed connections made in his text between the Grail kingdom in the west and its equally fabulous counterpart in the east.⁵¹ The Grail in *Parzival* remains in the Grail castle, but the implication of the story of the union of Feirefiz and Repanse de Schoye is that some at least of its miraculous powers are translated to the Indian kingdom which the Grail bearer's son, the first Prester John, inherits from his father, Feirefiz. The conversion of the east, and the prominent part played in it by the Angevin and Grail dynasties, is obliquely figured in Wolfram's romance as part of an occult plot devised by God to christianize and unite the world.

There is a further twist. This plot involves not only Parzival's half-brother and his aunt, but his son Loherangrin, the heir to the Grail kingdom in the west. On one level, the life God pre-ordains for Loherangrin is tragic. When he is sent to marry the princess of Brabant, the Grail stipulates that she must never ask him to reveal his name and lineage (*Parzival*, 827.27–30). When she violates this divinely imposed prohibition and demands that he reveal his identity, Loherangrin is forced to return to the Grail castle without her and the "beautiful children" [*schœniu kint*] (*Parzival*, 826.9) she bears him. His apparently foreordained desertion of his wife and family in compliance with God's will implies the end of the Grail kingdom in the Christian west where Wolfram imprecisely locates it.⁵² Yet appearances in the enigmatic Loherangrin story are deceptive, and do no justice to the belief in the benevolent nature of God's providence that permeates *Parzival*. As Wolfram and any audience comprising Otto's allies in 1214 would have been aware, the lineage that traced its descent from the swan knight prospered despite the fact that Loherangrin was forced by the Grail to abandon his children.⁵³ Loherangrin's dynasty may not have inherited the Grail kingdom in the west described in *Parzival*, but among the "historical" descendants of his union with the princess of Brabant were the founders and first rulers of the kingdom of Jerusalem, not to mention Otto and his wife. This genealogical link between the past of Wolfram's romance and the present in which the author composed it is only alluded to in the passing reference to the princess of Brabant. But the

genealogy which Wolfram so prides himself on having set out allows, and even positively encourages, his audience to make links between the ancestors who are the actors in his romance and their putative real-life descendants who inhabited the present in which *Parzival* was first read and performed. Wolfram can safely have assumed that his first readers and listeners would know enough about the families who ruled their world to fill in the gaps left by the ending of *Parzival*, and identify Otto and his wife as the descendants of Loherangrin. A genealogical interpretation of the kind the Loherangrin story seems to require would permit the inference that in conquering Jerusalem, Godfrey and Baldwin, Loherangrin's (and Parzival's) descendants, had translated the Grail dynasty from west to east, restored it to its regal dignity, and established the historical crusader kingdom of Jerusalem over which it ruled as the symbolic successor to the kingdom of the Grail.

Otto was obligated by his office as emperor to ensure the rule of Christ on earth, and there was a general hope and expectation that he would go on crusade.⁵⁴ It was an expectation which, after the defeat of the Angevin alliance at Bouvines in 1214, he was never able to fulfil. But when he married Maria of Brabant just a few weeks before Bouvines, his prospects must still have looked bright, and the crusading ambition to recapture Jerusalem was far from dead in early thirteenth-century Europe. If, as seems plausible, Otto and Maria listened to readings of *Parzival*, they would have been able to recognize themselves from the dynastic hints and clues scattered so liberally across the text as descendants of the Angevin and Grail dynasties to which the hero supposedly belonged. But they would have discovered themselves to be related also, on the basis of Wolfram's pointed fictional genealogy, to the descendants of Feirefiz and Prester John. The story of Prester John as reported in the middle of the twelfth century by Otto von Freising is that having defeated the Persians, Medes, and Assyrians, he led his army to help the Church in Jerusalem, but finding himself unable to cross the Tigris, was forced to return to India. One of the millenarian hopes of the Christian west was that Prester John might relaunch his stalled crusade, and that his fabled wealth and power would establish God's order in the world, and so bring an end to crusading.⁵⁵ When Parzival and Feirefiz first encounter one another, they fight as Christian fought against non-Christian in the wars of the crusades. But God intervenes to prevent fratricide, and they are reconciled in brotherly (and latterly Christian) love which, as a consequence of Feirefiz's conversion and marriage into the Grail dynasty, spreads from west to east. Cryptic and full of gaps though the story of Loherangrin and Prester John

is, the complex genealogical frame of reference which connects it with the main narrative hints at the possibility of the kind of providential happy end symbolically foreshadowed in the encounter between Parzival and Feirefiz: a reunion of the separated branches of the Angevin and Grail dynasties figured in the persons of the western emperor Otto, the descendant of Parzival, and his eastern counterpart and kinsman Prester John, the descendant of Feirefiz.⁵⁶ Such a family reunion would imply the founding of a new Grail kingdom bigger and more powerful than that inherited by Parzival and seemingly lost by Loherangrin, a kingdom in which east and west would be reconciled in Christian and dynastic love. Its center could, of course, be nowhere but Jerusalem.

*Fictional history as ideology: functions
of the Grail legend from Robert de Boron
to the Roman de Perceforest*

Friedrich Wolfzettel

The discussion in this chapter continues a line of research into the way in which history functions in medieval romance and especially in Arthurian literature. From a critical/ideological perspective that was inspired by the eminent study of my teacher, Professor Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, first published in 1956,¹ I tried to investigate what might be called – in psychoanalytical terms – the *suppression* of real history by ever-new attempts at imaginary historical constructs. In light of this regressive tendency, the ideological project as conceived in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes seems endangered from the outset by a self-destructive or deconstructive principle. The sacred symbol of the Grail, first introduced into Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, may be interpreted as the revenge of repressed reality, but at the same time it may be regarded as a further step towards the "irrealization" of history, replaced by a sort of counter-history. I studied the dialectics of utopian thoughts in "Probleme der Geschichtskonstruktion im arthurischen Roman" (1998),² to which might be added my essay on "Temps et histoire dans la littérature arthurienne" (1999).³ Closest to the thesis developed here, however, is another article on the problematic status of the Grail, "Ein Evangelium für Ritter: *La Queste del Saint Graal* und die *Estoire dou Graal* von Robert de Boron" (1997).⁴ In this essay I argued that the heretical message of the Grail story was directly linked to crusading chivalry, especially to the Knights Templar, who were themselves suspected of heretical tendencies. The rewriting of the apocryphal story of Joseph of Arimathea, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, to serve the interests of the chivalric class testifies to a form of reactive megalomania from which this class suffered: it needed a new aristocratic gospel for its own justification.

The following discussion is based on these ideas. It aims at deconstructing a long tradition of positive interpretations of the Grail symbol, which in recent popular representations in books, films, and television is still surrounded by an aura of mysterious forces. Actually, the Grail is far

from being the conspicuous sacred symbol of a "history of the human spirit" [*menschliche Geistesgeschichte*], as Gerhard von dem Borne has put it in a combination of humanistic and theosophic approaches to the subject.⁵ Neither is it simply an alternative sacred myth which tends to supplant the gospels, the Eucharist and the hierarchy of the Church in a new mix of myth and religion. From this perspective one might even be tempted to attribute a progressive function to it. Contrary to assertions about a supposed lack of utopian dimensions, the Grail in fact represents a strong argument in favor of the existence of a utopian strain. But it is a utopian strain that serves class interests and not the spiritual well-being of mankind as a whole.

Finally, like all utopian systems, the Grail negates history by suggesting alternative historical constructions. It is dependent on these "false" histories which, however, in a sort of dialectical irony, may reveal fascinating new aspects of history as such. As the ontological and Lacanian interpretation of the Grail by Alexandre Leupin suggests,⁶ the symbol of the Grail is liable to be considered as an empty symbol, as a sort of *fata morgana* of the medieval mind. For Leupin, the *Estoire del Saint Graal* of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* is the "*texte fondateur*" that necessarily condemns every subsequent text to being a fragmentary, empty text needing completion.⁷ It is the dead end of the apotheosis of sacred history, which proves totally incompatible with traditional history. In "Temps et histoire dans la littérature arthurienne" I concluded by emphasizing the problematic relationship between worldly and sacred history, or more precisely between the open secular history which is part of the Augustinian conception of sacred history and the "sacred" history of the Grail, which is actually a mythological construct. But I also advanced the idea that it was this latter construct that opened up the vast horizon of reflection on history.⁸

I

Neither in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* nor in Wolfram's *Parzival* is the Grail a specifically historical symbol. On the contrary, its rapid growth in popularity was probably due to the dogmatic revival of interest in the Eucharist in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. But in terms of the Grail's genealogical implications, analyzed by Brigitte Cazelles,⁹ as well as its utopian connotations, arising out of the sacralization of an originally folkloric or mythic object,¹⁰ these two early Grail romances display an inherently eschatological meaning. Some perspectives on genealogical and historical progression in Wolfram's romance are considered in the previous

chapter of this volume. With regard to Grail romance in France, Pauline Matarasso has pointed out that the redemption of chivalry, which will be the subject of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, is already implicit in the biblical scheme of Fall, sin, and decadence, on the one hand, and rise, restoration, and redemption, on the other.¹¹ After the episodic Arthurian romances, whose actions are identical to their chivalric message, Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* is the first fully-fledged biographical romance whose structure aims to stress the above-mentioned scheme of moral guilt and expiation, but whose open end also suggests the end of both genealogical and Arthurian history, and even the end of history as such.

We know that this conception, which gave rise to numerous continuations of the Grail legend as conceived by Chrétien, is explicitly stated as a sort of leitmotiv in the bulk of Arthurian Grail romances. Paradoxically, the Grail as a historical symbol emancipated from myth is bound to bring about the end of history. It suggests more than the end of the kingdom of Arthur in its own right, a closing movement which is discussed in [Chapters 7 and 8](#) of this volume. It seems to denote a deep-rooted scepticism or even anxiety about the historical process as such, an anxiousness to shorten the remaining span of time allotted to the history of mankind and to put an end even to the former ideal of chivalric Arthurian society. It is this tendency to depreciate implicitly the present time in light of a utopian future that requires critical attention. The Grail implies the devaluation of history as such – history as an independent category of human life – and it is certainly no accident that the new conception of the Grail legends was immediately preceded by the Franciscan utopia of the coming Third Realm of the Holy Spirit, as described by the Calabrian monk Joachim da Fiore. Quite convincingly, the American scholar F. W. Locke has attributed a Pentecostal structure to the *Queste*, which is structured according to the evangelical *parousia*-model.¹² Both Kurt Ruh¹³ and Klaus Speckenbach¹⁴ in Germany have made a case for the importance of this religious and eschatological philosophy of history for Robert de Boron and the *Prose Lancelot* of the *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*, but without recognizing sufficiently that the conception of the Grail itself announces the closure of history. The new conception of sacred history will from now on rival worldly Arthurianism and eventually tend to supplant it – and not only Arthurian history but historiography as well.

While Chrétien may well be said to have paved the way for a monumental alliance of sacred history and Arthurianism, he did not take the ultimate, decisive step. It was his successor, Robert de Boron, and the anonymous author of the *Estoire del Saint Graal* who first managed

this combination by creating the most powerful historical vision ever conceived in this context until then. To the incomplete Grail story as it was – rather vaguely – delineated by Chrétien, Robert opposed “*la plus grant Estoire*” (line 3487),¹⁵ a complete eschatological construction in the wake of chivalric and Arthurian dreams of boundless power and the imagery of the Crusades.¹⁶ Robert de Boron laid the foundations of what was to be finished in the *Queste del Saint Graal*. The conception in the *Queste* of the new Saviour, Galahad, whose portrayal has been compared by the German scholar Hans Bayer to Catharic attempts at self-deification, had been prepared by Robert de Boron’s new gospel,¹⁷ a reworking of Christian history in view of apocryphal sources with regard to the history of medieval chivalry. Pauline Matarasso has written in her 1979 study of a spiritual reinterpretation and upgrading of the chivalric class eager to grasp at every possibility of proving its own historical necessity.

The problem of chivalry, exemplified by contemporary works on the chivalric code and by passages such as the long didactic accounts in the first part of the Lancelot story, may well support the traditional hypothesis of a Cistercian spirit at work in the *Queste* and the *Prose Lancelot*. But neither medieval redactors nor most modern readers and critics have seemed to examine seriously the openly heretical character of this sort of alternative or counter-history, which was created under the spiritual guidance of Bernard of Clairvaux and which was based on the claims of the Order of Cîteaux to be, in the phrase of Albert Pauphilet, “*la conductrice du monde chrétien*” [the driving force of the Christian world].¹⁸ Hans Bayer has argued that Robert de Boron and his successors followed orthodox pedagogical efforts to combat contemporary heretical tendencies in northern and southern France. The German historian seems deliberately to ignore the fact that sacramental orthodoxy – if indeed the literal interpretation of the blood symbolism in the Joseph of Arimathea story is really orthodox – is by no means incompatible with a heretical concept of the subsequent history of the Church. Being rather benevolent towards leanings like these, Myrrha Lot-Borodine, for instance, spoke of an “apostolic fraternity” that has nothing of a warrior ethos,¹⁹ without noticing that this apostolic fraternity culminates in a new apostolic succession and – still more provocatively – in a theocratic alliance of priesthood and chivalry. Joseph of Arimathea, a knightly figure himself, who relies on the fidelity of five other knights and maintains a privileged relationship with Pontius Pilate and the officers of the Roman Empire, is both a new secular Moses and the predecessor of Galahad. Having been kept alive in prison for fifteen years by the Sacred Vessel in which he had collected the blood of Christ at the moment of

Christ's death, he establishes a divergent rite of the Last Supper and recruits officers as new apostles from amongst his own relatives.

Instead of imitating the apostolic succession of the Church, Joseph resorts to the aristocratic principle of lineage. Bron, who is the brother-in-law of Joseph and whose name recalls Hebron, the guardian of the Ark in the Old Testament, as well as Bran the Blessed, the owner of the vessel or horn of plenty in Celtic mythology, will be the future "*riche Pescheeur*" (Fisher King). His children will spread out as new apostles, and in particular his chaste son Alain will be the prototype of Galahad. Alain will go to the Land of the West, into the valleys of "Avaron" (apparently the Arthurian "Avalon"), "*la terre vers Occident [. . .] es vaus d'Avaron*" (lines 3219–21), thereby linking Arthurian history with the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. The new Church of the Chosen Few founded by Joseph of Arimathea will thus establish a new chivalric succession designed to link Arthurianism to Christological beginnings or else to demonstrate the Christological foundation of Arthurian society and of chivalry as such. Francesco Zambon²⁰ has rightly reminded us of the fact that the mysteries of the Grail are from the very beginning dependent on aristocratic principles of property and inheritance. Similarly, Hans Bayer has emphasized the importance of genealogical concepts in this Arthurianized gospel. Salvation has thus ceased to be a universal promise of the Church, as it is now linked to a cryptic message and is dependent on special election. Robert de Boron manifestly rewrites the gospel in light of the new, obsessional principle of genealogy, the importance of which around 1200 has been pointed out by R. Howard Bloch²¹ and Gabrielle Spiegel;²² earlier chapters in this volume explore the recurrent concern with genealogy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

We know almost nothing about Robert de Boron,²³ who claims to have written his new gospel of future chivalry at the request of his lord, Gautier de Montbéliard. The latter participated in the Fourth Crusade and went to Jerusalem, not Constantinople. At the end of Robert's account of Joseph of Arimathea in the *Roman del saint Graal*, before the continuation of his work in the (fragmentary) story of Merlin, the author remarks – in the previously cited phrase – that he wanted to tell "*dou Graal la plus grant Estoire*" (line 3487) and that he planned to add to his book the remaining parts that were still lacking and that would restore the whole meaning of the Grail. *La plus grant Estoire* may well mean the great or wonderful story, as Monica Schöler-Beinhauer has put it in her translation, but it might also refer to Chrétien and imply the wish to surpass his work. As for the *Grand Livre* also mentioned in Robert's text, Gerhard von dem Borne,²⁴ who

stresses the respect with which such thirteenth-century authors refer to a "great Book," has suggested the existence of a secret Manichaean manuscript to which Robert de Boron might have been referring and which might well recall similar tendencies on the part of the Knights Templar. The radical reworking of the traditional Arthurian material by an author who was probably, as Alexandre Micha²⁵ puts it in his *Étude sur le "Merlin,"* "[m]essires et mestres tout à la fois" – an aristocrat and a cleric at the same time – thus not only reflects the spirit of the Crusades. Robert's enterprise seems also to short-circuit normal ecclesiastical history by rooting the Christianization of Britain and the subsequent rise of the Arthurian ideal society in one figure, a man who had been neglected by the official Church.

Contrary to what we normally associate with the end of the twelfth century, which is supposed to have been the golden age of arts and letters in France, the growing popularity, or rather the obsessive proliferation, of the Grail legends thus seems to indicate an age of crisis for chivalry, a crisis that might be overcome by the claim of a mysterious providential origin and a sort of apostolic mission. The former ideal of an alliance of *chevalerie* and *clergie*, which had spread in the wake of the rise of vernacular romance since the middle of the twelfth century, seems to have been no longer sufficient to warrant the supremacy of the chivalric class, which now had to rely on messianic overtones and to usurp even clerical functions. The historical concept put forward by Robert de Boron aims at a consistently elitist and clerical scheme of history, which leaves no room for other aspects of world history. In the Sacred Vessel to which Joseph of Arimathea is in the habit of speaking, and which in its turn speaks to him in order to reveal to him God's providential will, Joseph finds the guarantee of his sacred task. It is in this sacred symbol of plenty that sacred history and worldly history seem to converge, presenting an exemplar of how things ought to be. The utopian connotations of Arthurian history, which in Chrétien's work had been made subservient to exclusively social and moral aims, now form the framework of a whole eschatological construction that indirectly censures the growing gap between history and Christian lore. The genealogical scheme not only serves as a powerful agent to legitimize a class; it is employed by Robert de Boron to establish a providential genealogy in the name of Christ. The new conception highlights the crisis of the chivalric class.

The Grail legend is the epitome of an apparently gratuitous historical construction, the breakdown of which at the end of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* may be interpreted as a sort of deconstruction of the ideological aim

of confirming the conflicting claims of sacred symbolism and historical demands. The amplification of Robert de Boron's romance in the subsequent *Estoire del Saint Graal*,²⁶ the first part of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, spans the whole passage between the Fall of Man, the Old Testament, and Arthurian Camelot, between the heathen Orient and the Christian Occident. "How could the descent from Breton kings not be enhanced in value by an oriental origin?" comments Gérard Gros in the Pléiade edition of *Le Livre du Graal*.²⁷ The anonymous author of the work no longer competes with Chrétien in writing a *romanz*. His aim is to give us the authentic *estoire* – the complete history, whose revelation he claims to have received directly from God himself.

The stupendous beginning of the work in the style of the book of Revelation clearly exhibits the new self-assurance of the clerical writer militating for "*sainte Eglise*."²⁸ While the author adopts the fundamental circumstances described in Robert de Boron's verse romance, he tries to mitigate the heretical overtones of Robert's *Roman del saint Graal* by stressing the importance of his *estoire* for the history of Christianity as such. But the major innovation of the book, the appearance of Josephé, the son of Joseph, the first bishop and spiritual ancestor of Galahad, correspondingly strengthens the spiritually purified genealogical design of the whole construct – without leveling any critical remarks at "my lord Robert de Boron who translated this history from Latin into French."²⁹ Joseph of Arimathea thus in a way becomes the indirect ancestor of "the fortunate knight who put an end to the adventures of the Holy Grail and of *la Grant Bretagne*."³⁰ By this means, the linkage established between sacred beginnings and the redemption effected by Galahad becomes even closer. Moreover, a great number of episodes referring to the conversion of heathen Oriental kings reinforce the importance of the Oriental theme, which seems to function as a sort of metonymical reference to ancient history. Much more consistently than is the case in Robert's treatment of the Grail legend, world history as a whole forms the antecedent of a providentialized and sacralized Arthurian history. In addition, a web of onomastic resemblances, echoes, and references supports the relationship between ancient and modern history, pre-Arthurian and properly Arthurian history. Nothing is left to chance. The author has eliminated every gratuitous detail with a view to enhancing the effect of a completely, obsessively *significant* universe.³¹ Genealogy not only bridges the obvious gap of hundreds of years but also contributes to creating a well-rounded history with no lacunae at all. By leaving aside all further historical information, this kind of *estoire* suggests a simplified, ideal history which, in

light of the ultimate failure of Galahad's providential mission, seems to evince a desperate hope, namely that historical problems can be solved by resorting to utopian means. The *Estoire*, which is composed in "authenticating" prose (discussed in [Chapter 3](#) of this volume) and which openly commends historical truth, claims to be history.

Of course, it is pseudo-history. Contrary to what most scholars have maintained with regard to the *Prose Lancelot*, I should like to suggest that one function of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* as a whole is to demonstrate the breakdown of this utopian framework and to restore the open history of chivalric biography. In contrast to the harmonizing eschatological features of the *Perlesvaus*,³² written probably before the *Queste*, in the first decade of the thirteenth century, the *Lancelot-Grail* is based on the conflicting issues of secular and "celestial" chivalry. In spite of its catastrophic scenery, the *Perlesvaus* includes a vision of spiritual harmony brought about by the realm of the Grail; the "*Haut Livre du Graal*" could in fact be interpreted by J. Neale Carman as a symbolic New Testament.³³ The *Lancelot-Grail*, however, makes it clear that the history of the Grail, for all its sacred antecedents, is just a failure preceding the catastrophe of King Arthur's realm. Lancelot is the epitome of this world. He is the *chevalier errant* par excellence, and thus becomes a sort of chivalric Everyman, whose errors constitute the stuff of life itself.³⁴ So the verdict that will definitely exclude the hero from the achievement of the Holy Grail may also be positively interpreted as a symbol of the contradictory status of history, since the Grail is the negation of worldly history. Lancelot, the first and the best knight, will win a biographical consistency that will outlast even the end of the Arthurian kingdom after the death of King Arthur, to say nothing of the quest for the Grail. In contrast to his father, accordingly, Lancelot's son, Galahad, will not have any historical biography of his own, his real function being the removal or transferal of the Holy Grail to its origin. By creating a special sacred history that has proved incompatible with normal human history, the Grail has in fact become a hindrance to anything that lies outside its realm. That is the paradox of the double bind in which Lancelot finds himself. His bad luck, his complete failure, constitutes a prerequisite for the emergence of his historical status as a fictional character. The derogatory commentary of the hermit in the *Queste del Saint Graal*, "Now you may well say that you are mis-adventurous, since you have not accomplished the high adventure in which these three worthy men were engaged,"³⁵ thus simply denotes the particular stance of the hero who does not belong to the chosen few. Ironically, the apotheosis that we witness at the end of the *Queste del Saint Graal* confirms the failure of the

Grail adventure and the failure of the collective quest, which is the real subject of the work. The self-revelation of the Grail, which seems to constitute the apex of the whole story, actually points to the definite separation of the two incompatible spheres of history and sacred utopia. In spite of having fulfilled all his tasks – or should we say, just because he has fulfilled these tasks – Galahad will be forced to return to the “spiritual palace” [*pales espirituel*]³⁶ of the mythic origin of the Grail and, moreover, to keep the Grail company [*fere compaignie a cest saint Vessel*],³⁷ since it is not allowed to stay in the sinful realm of Logres. But this realm, though it is bound to perish symbolically, is also the realm of history, whereas the divine transferal of Galahad clearly indicates a mythic (unreal) solution. His being crowned king in oriental Sarraz after the death of the heathen king Escorant and the later removal of the Grail and the Holy Lance by a heavenly hand at the hour of the hero’s death both testify to mythical models as opposed to the reality of history. The return of the Grail (and of the Grail king) to the Holy Land is indicative of the failure of a grandiose experiment: the experiment of the sacralization of the Arthurian world and the replacement of a secular utopia by an eschatological utopia.

II

It is not the end of the idea. Imaginary or fictionalized constructions of history must have had a powerful attraction for the late medieval mind. More than a century after the *Queste* (written probably about the 1220s) and the *Estoire* (written perhaps shortly after the *Queste*), the anonymous author of the *Roman de Perceforest*, written between 1337 and 1344 in Hainaut, makes a new and – as it seems – last attempt to combine ancient and modern (i.e., contemporary medieval) history by means of the Grail legend: “the most expansive romance that the Middle Ages has bequeathed to us and perhaps also the most tedious of all its compositions,” as Louis-Fernand Flûtre³⁸ comments in 1948. Meanwhile, the monumental critical edition by Jane Taylor and especially Gilles Roussineau,³⁹ as well as the research done by scholars like Jeanne Lods, Anne Berthelot, Christine Ferlampin-Acher, and others, has considerably modified postwar judgments of this kind. The five parts of the *Perceforest* are in fact a grandiose genealogical epic that presents an alternative story of the antecedents of the Arthurian Grail history. What is even more important is that it is a sort of pre-Arthurian epic, in which the Grail has only a symbolic part. By shifting the latter symbol to the end of his work, the author seems to suggest that this symbol is in fact of minor narrative importance. The “pre-Arthurian” romance⁴⁰ is

also a pre-Grail romance and even a pre-Geoffrey-of-Monmouth romance in the sense that the work's real subject is the history or pre-history of the British Isles. Instead of rewriting the Grail history the author simply hints at the story of Joseph of Arimathea with regard to Gallafur, a sort of new Galahad, who is seeking the Truth and will be healed of leprosy by looking at the Grail itself.

Although the Grail is the symbol of the "good news" of the Gospel, inaugurating a new epoch in the history of the redemption of chivalry, the ideological center of the narrative is clearly elsewhere, engaged with what this history was like before the coming of the Grail. King Arthur and Arthurian heroes are the descendants of their non-Arthurian ancestors, but like the Grail they do not seem to have a life of their own. Themes, motifs, and narrative procedures are still indebted to Arthurian models, and the author takes pains to introduce many premonitory or prefigurative elements which are to lead up to Arthurian history. However, the main emphasis is on the preceding history, as if the author wanted to invert the normal function and direction of prefiguration by giving the antecedents a special value. In this pre-Arthurian light the theme of the ideal kingdom has likewise been shifted from the Arthurian kingdom to that of Perceforest – whose name of course echoes that of Perceval – but unlike in Chrétien's *Perceval* (the *Conte du Graal*) and the subsequent Grail romances, there is no longer a dichotomy between the secular and the divine realms. The Grail no longer functions as a strong expression of eschatological and utopian ends. The history of Perceforest may prefigure Christian history, establishing a sort of typological link between two periods that roughly correspond to antiquity and modern times. But the completely new, de-Arthurianized conception of the period of pre-history overtly opposes the evangelical apparatus of the *Estoire del saint Graal* and seems already to announce the new spirit of humanism and the Renaissance. The whole fabric of the Grail romance has thus undergone important ideological modifications.

The main function of the Grail as a symbol of sacred history seems to have been preserved: the Grail still acts as a catalyst for the production of imaginary history. But in contrast to what happens in orthodox Grail romances, the alternative imaginary history is no longer subservient to the Grail story. On the contrary, the pre-history has largely emancipated itself from its sacred end, to which it is only loosely linked, mainly by genealogical means. What also strikes the modern reader – and perhaps struck the contemporary medieval reader as well – is the positive image of the pre-Grail epoch. The theme of pagan ignorance and sinfulness connected with

the first inhabitants of the British Isles becomes irrelevant at the moment when, right after the conquest of the country by Perceforest and his companions, the temple of the hermit Dardanon is discovered in an out-of-the-way place. Perceforest has just broken the malicious spell of the enchanted Forest of Darnant and has secured the victory of his own good lineage over the bad lineage of his enemies. He is ready to listen to the new "gospel" of the one sovereign God, in whose honor a magnificent temple will be erected. Long before the appearance of the Grail and the new Christian religion embodied in a sacred object, the reign of Perceforest and his knights is thus placed under the protection of the one invisible God, who, of course, prefigures the coming of Christ, but whose worship requires no ritual except meditation and prayer. There are no priests and no clerics, no sacraments administered by a special class of men. Even marriage is celebrated without the assistance of any priest. Dardanon and other hermits who appear in the course of the narrative continue to live in seclusion "in order to serve the Sovereign God according to the law of that time,"⁴¹ but this religious law does not imply any secular claim. As Gilles Roussineau puts it, "Between pagan mythology and Christianity the author has fashioned an intermediary religion to whose sober and austere cult he seems to be partial."⁴² This unique and slightly utopian religious creed thus constitutes a sort of anti-Grail conception, if not a conception with anti-Christian leanings, which might well be related to Judaic parallels.

Accordingly, if the typological theme of prefiguration seems to be perfectly fitting for this historical scheme, the overwhelmingly positive value attributed to the pre-Christian condition of a completely internalized religious feeling is more than surprising. The Grail legend was liable to be interpreted as the overtly heretical concept of an elitist chivalric gospel tinged by current Pentecostal connotations, but even so it remained a very Catholic symbol, which was employed to promote the cause of the chivalric order, especially that of the Templars. Its utopian tendencies were directed at the present and the immediate future. The anti-ritualistic cult of the Sovereign God, however, represents an ideal religion of the past. Far from prefiguring Christianity, as the author would like to suggest, it prefigures a sort of enlightened religion that might make present-day readers think of Protestantism, if not of the age of Enlightenment itself. In his discussion of providential history the author even goes so far as to refer to "*le Dieu de Nature*."⁴³ The notion of natural religion or natural revelation seems to anticipate popular conceptions of the eighteenth century. In other words, the prefiguration scheme serves to disguise the

characteristics of a non-Catholic religion, which has been removed to a historical past, but of which the target seems to be Catholic Christianity as such.

As an autonomous imaginary history, this pre-Arthurian epic is not content with reminding us of a forgotten aspect of Revelation, as the Grail legends do. It reminds us of a possible alternative history, which we could very well characterize in terms of the modern concept of *counterfactual history*, according to the scheme “What would the course of things have been if . . . ?” It seems that the whole *Perceforest* is built on this astonishingly modern device. So the author obviously wonders what would have happened if Alexander the Great – whose extensive exploits had intrigued medieval romance from its early stages ([Chapter 2](#)) – had conquered the British Isles, and he does not hesitate to elaborate the point. By compiling an impressive number of historical reference points from Gildas, Bede, Henry of Huntingdon, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and others, he succeeds in underscoring the historical veracity of his counterfactual conception. And significantly, at the root of this counterfactual conception lies the theme of salvation.

In Book I the oracle of Venus announces the arrival of Alexander, whom the Breton lords in distress had sent for to help them against their enemies. Alexander thus arrives as a savior, and he leaves the country after installing a righteous rule. His helpers are Betis, who will be called Perceforest after cutting through the enchanted Forest of Darnant and being crowned king of England, and Gadifer, who will be crowned king of Scotland and whose task is to found the chivalric community of “the knights of the dozen vows” [*chevaliers aux douze vœus*] at the end of Book I, obviously a prefiguration of the Knights of the Round Table. As already indicated, the main event after the military exploits is the discovery of the hermit Dardanon, which implies a new revelation, a gospel of truth. As the author himself points out, the new realm is the realm of spiritual truth. But Alexander is not only the savior of the country. By falling in love with a beautiful fay and becoming the father of a male child, he will also be an ancestor of King Arthur himself. The Arthurian kingdom would thus not have been possible without this providential turn of events brought about by the Sovereign God. And once more, Alexander’s exploits not only prefigure those of King Arthur, but also form the very basis of subsequent events.

Thus, even if all the following adventures consciously remind us of Arthurian models and prepare for the coming of the ultimate Truth, which is Christ, this ideal chivalric society seems to have an intrinsic value that is

not subordinated to future ends. Two symbolic events especially punctuate the ongoing struggle between Good and Evil. First, there is the foundation of the Order of the Franc-Palais (in Book II) by Perceforest, who has been restored to health after a long period of depression. The Franc-Palais obviously prefigures the Arthurian Round Table. And then we are told of the great religious feasts which are to be celebrated (in Book IV) at the temple of the Sovereign God. In this temple Gallafur will have a visionary dream about his destiny. Gallafur is the grandson of King Gadifer and, in light of the Arthurian symbolism of the work, he clearly is to be a new Galahad. But once more, the author tries to adjust and correct the former Arthurian tradition, to which he refers without imitating it. Gallafur, the new Galahad, is not chaste. He has children, among them Ygerne, an ancestress of Arthur. His function does not consist of building up a new Christian militia or "celestial" chivalry as opposed to secular chivalry. In this alternative history, the prefiguration of Galahad is deeply rooted in the chivalric values represented by the inscriptions of the Franc-Palais. In the face of the forthcoming catastrophe that will threaten the two kingdoms of Perceforest and Gadifer, he stands for the historical permanence and validity of these values. They are celebrated for the last time during the opening feast in Book IV, which, according to Roussineau, has a pivotal function: it marks the climax of Perceforest's reign and the last happy moment of this alternative history.⁴⁴ The Roman invasion, which puts an end to the chivalric idyll, is of course also reminiscent of the fall of the Arthurian empire. But here, too, there is a notable difference between the Arthurian end and the destruction of Alexander's legacy. Not only will the chivalric values attached to the Franc-Palais outlast the existence of the state – significantly the final battle will be waged near this temple of an enlightened chivalry – but there is also a magic sword sticking in the threshold of the palace gate, which is a guarantee of the future renewal of this society. The author has obviously rewritten the history of the fall of Arthur with a view to suggesting a divergent historical development.

Now, as Gilles Roussineau has pointed out, the realm of Perceforest is also marked by decadence. "Omens of the fall are not lacking. On many occasions there are allusions to the senescence of chivalry."⁴⁵ However, this chivalric decadence is clearly not a moral one, but a sort of weakening, a growing loss of conviction and vitality. No sinful lust, no adulterous love is sapping the foundations of the empire as the prevailing moral argument of the Lancelot story informs us. On the contrary, we are faced with a historical process. At the end of the so-called Middle Ages, the author describes the crisis of a class and the waning of an age in terms

of physiological and psychological weariness and moral exhaustion. Roussineau⁴⁶ has stressed the symbolic meaning of the disappearance of a knight called Estonné who, as a member of the community of the Franc-Palais, represents “the main pillar that has held up the honor and the status of all prowess and knighthood.”⁴⁷ Much could be said about the frequent theme of despondency and melancholy in this romance. In view of a medical diagnosis, Perceforest, the founder of this ideal kingdom, is in fact a problematic hero from the outset. The learned author of the work seems to have deliberately combined his sources in order to sketch an image of decadence in terms of vitality, not morality. This is another sign of his pre-humanistic outlook on life and of a cyclic and fundamentally philosophical conception of history.

By the same token there is also the hope of renewal and restoration. This cycle of decadence and rebirth is not a Christian but a humanistic concept. In some ways, the Arthurian age is preceded by two Perceforest periods of history, and history at large appears as a never-ending process of civilization. In the face of the imminent catastrophe, Gadifer reminds his despondent uncle of this circular movement of history under the eye of the Sovereign God. All the great kingdoms of the earth since Noah, “*Babylonne en Orient, Cartage pardevers Midy, Greece devers Septentrion et Romme en Occident*,” are mentioned as historical exempla of “*contraire fortune*.”⁴⁸ For a moment the author even seems to forget that Perceforest will succumb to the Roman invasion, and that, consequently, Roman history is not yet over. But the implicit historical fatalism seems to have a dialectics of its own. On the one hand, “prophetic warnings introduce a heavy atmosphere of fatalism,” as Roussineau remarks.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the fatal “mutations of Fortune”⁵⁰ seem to open up the horizon of a cyclic history which does not and must not come to an end. At the end of Book IV, Perceforest’s daughter, Betoine – the widow of the son of Alexander – will be sought. Chivalry is maintained; in Book V, twelve ritual tournaments demonstrate the renewal of chivalric civilization. The winner can gain a rose, and he who wins all the roses will win also the hand of the granddaughter of the Fay, Alexander’s love. The latter, who bore the symbolic name Sibylle and who represents Nature, guarantees a natural history under the providence of a natural God. The new chivalry will still be the chivalry of Alexander before it is metamorphosed into Arthurian chivalry. Actually, the latter, in its turn, is but an episode of this cyclical process.

This last Grail romance is thus a Grail romance in quotation marks. The holy objective of the Grail is only of minor importance for the narrative.

Prefiguration serves as a mask to hide the growing autonomy of the new genealogical construction of history. Obviously, there is no way back to the Grail romances as conceived by Chrétien, Robert de Boron, and the authors of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*. By exaggerating the eschatological meaning of the Grail, these authors were increasingly induced to invent an alternative history, to say nothing of an alternative, virtually heretical message regarding their designs. It was a historical construction that ultimately proved sterile in spite of being obsessively reiterated and rewritten for almost half a century. It was sterile because it represented a dead end. As previously indicated, Galahad's final return to the holy city of Sarraz and the Grail's assumption into heaven both indicate a symbolic closure. The Grail simply returns to where it had come from; Arthurian history is over; but, as Lancelot makes us realize, life goes on.

The *Roman de Perceforest* seems to make use of the Grail story simply as a means of integrating a distinguished tradition into its historical design. The cyclical conception of history put forward by the narrative suggests the preeminence of a prestigious past that is neither Arthurian nor Christian. And the story itself suggests an open historical process even if the hoped-for renewal of chivalry seems to remain doubtful. In spite of the numerous Arthurian reminiscences and many features recalling conventional notions of the Middle Ages, the *Perceforest* seems to denote a new, proto-humanist spirit. So it is perhaps no mere coincidence that this romance contains the first medieval example of a full-fledged popular fairy tale, the tale of Sleeping Beauty (at the end of Book III),⁵¹ and that this tale has the function of echoing the main aim of the story in a sort of *mise en abyme*. Awakening the unclad Sleeping Beauty is an equivalent to awakening a long-forgotten historical truth. Perhaps it is due to this virtual pre-modernity that the *Perceforest*, amongst all the prose romances of the Middle Ages, became one of the most popular romances in the Renaissance.

*The Prose Brut, Hardyng's Chronicle, and
the Alliterative Morte Arthure: the end of the story*

Edward Donald Kennedy

This chapter will examine the contrasting conclusions to the story of King Arthur in two chronicles, the *Prose Brut* and Hardyng's metrical *Chronicle*, and one work, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which is usually classified as a romance but is primarily derived from chronicles, and it will consider how medieval interest in causality, Fortune, and destiny is reflected in the conclusion to each. Of the three, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* is the best known. It has been edited (in whole or in part) ten times, most notably by Mary Hamel.¹ Probably written at about 1400 somewhere between the northeast and southeast Midlands,² it is considered one of the finest English works of the late Middle Ages and is important too as the primary source for the second tale in Malory's *Morte Darthur*.³ It has been the subject of a book-length study by William Matthews and of more than 125 articles, book chapters, and dissertations, not counting the many times it has been used in the study of Malory's work.⁴ Although it survives in a single manuscript, copied by the scribe Robert Thornton in the 1420s or 1430s,⁵ a few other manuscripts were probably in circulation, and it may have been known in Scotland.⁶ While Helen Cooper points out that Latin manuscripts, usually kept in cathedral and monastic libraries, had a better chance of surviving than the less well-cared-for vernacular works, she also observes that alliterative romances "did not have the wide geographical appeal of the metrical romances, and none reached print."⁷ The Alliterative *Morte*, in fact, was not printed until the nineteenth century and, although widely studied today, would not have been as well known in the medieval and early modern periods as the two works discussed below.

While the *Prose Brut* and Hardyng's *Chronicle* have until fairly recently been largely ignored by modern scholars, they were widely read in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The *Prose Brut* in its Norman and English versions survives in over two hundred manuscripts.⁸ It was the most popular secular work written in medieval England, and its English version was printed thirteen times in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,

with Caxton publishing the first two editions, entitled *Chronicles of England* (1480, 1482). Though unknown to many scholars of Middle English today, it would have been the work through which most literate people in England learned the history of their country and the story of King Arthur.⁹

Hardyng wrote two versions of his chronicle. The first, about 18,700 lines long, survives in one copy presented to the Lancastrian Henry VI in 1457.¹⁰ The second version, about 12,600 lines long, was prepared first for Richard Duke of York and after his death revised for Edward IV in about 1464. It survives in twelve almost complete manuscripts and three fragments and appears to have circulated as part of Edward IV's propaganda campaign to help justify his claim to the throne.¹¹

If we again consider Cooper's theory that vernacular manuscripts would have been more likely to disappear than Latin ones, it seems probable that there were originally many more manuscripts of the Prose *Brut* and the second version of Hardyng's chronicle. Those ignorant of these two works are out of touch with the versions of the Arthurian story that many in late medieval and early modern England read.

I

As Rosalind Field and D. H. Green have observed, distinctions between romance and chronicle were frequently blurred, and Green writes that Wolfram von Eschenbach's references to characters in romances outside of his *Parzival* tempt the audience into thinking that Wolfram is describing a non-fictive world.¹² The same could be said of the authors of the thirteenth-century French Arthurian romances, who wrote in prose, the traditional medium for historical truth, and who at times tried to give their works the appearance of historical documents.¹³ Previous chapters in this volume discuss the role of "authenticating" prose in the thirteenth century and the recurrent association of history with early romance.

However, with the exception of the prose *Estoire del Saint Graal*, which tells of how Joseph of Arimathea brought the Grail to Britain, probably not many people on the Continent would have considered these works historical. The French had their own chronicles, which, with the exception of some written in Brittany, generally ignored the Arthurian story, since Arthur's conquest of France, as depicted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* and other works, was not part of their historical tradition.¹⁴ Similarly, Boccaccio's account of Arthur in his *De casibus virorum illustrium* draws upon an English chronicle story of Arthur and

adds elements from the French prose Vulgate romance *Mort Artu*, but Boccaccio dismisses Arthur's story as a "fable," i.e., fiction. Just as the French were reluctant to accept Arthur's conquest of France, Boccaccio could not believe that he had conquered Rome.¹⁵

Lee Patterson has argued that the existence of the Arthurian romances made the Arthurian chronicles suspect. The romances "surrounded their chronicle cognates with an aura of fictiveness, casting upon historiography a shadow of incredibility."¹⁶ This was certainly true on the Continent. In England, however, the situation was different, for English chroniclers generally kept the non-fictive world of chronicles separate from the fictive world of romances and usually followed Geoffrey's history as if it were a canonical text from which they were reluctant to stray. There were a few exceptions, one of the most notable being Robert Mannyng's *Story of England*, which briefly alludes to events of the Arthurian verse and prose romances existing chronologically within the time frame of his chronicle.¹⁷ Aside from Mannyng, however, the most notable English attempts to blend chronicle and romance were two of the works being considered here, *Hardyng's chronicle* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.

More typical of chronicle treatment of the Arthurian story was that of the *Prose Brut*: while it augmented Geoffrey's account by adding dialogue and making Arthur into more of a Christian king fighting pagan enemies, its plot is essentially that of Geoffrey and Wace. The *Prose Brut* made the Arthurian story available to more people by presenting an account not in Latin but first in Anglo-Norman and later in English; moreover, it added authenticity to Geoffrey's *Historia* by following the example of those Latin chroniclers who incorporated Geoffrey's work into a chronicle that also told of the Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest periods. It would have been easy enough to dismiss Geoffrey's account, as a few chroniclers like William of Newburgh and Ranulph Higden did, if it had remained just a history of the Britons. However, Geoffrey's story gained greater credibility when it was incorporated as the introductory section of histories of England. The story of Arthur was not just subject to the chronology that Geoffrey had established, with the death of Arthur in 542 or, according to the *Prose Brut*, 546, but was now a part of the chronology of Britain and England that continued into the later Middle Ages. The context in which Geoffrey's history of the Britons was placed in these later chronicles made it credible, for if one could believe that there had been rulers like Henry V and Edward III and William the Conqueror and Alfred, one could also believe that there had been an Arthur. As Felicity Riddy observes, the *Prose Brut* provided reading for England,¹⁸ and through

vernacular accounts the Arthurian story reached an audience that Geoffrey probably could never have imagined or even have been interested in.

This history of the Middle Ages had been implicit in Geoffrey's work, for according to Merlin's prophecies and the prophecy that Cadwallader, the last king of Britain, received from an angelic voice, the Britons would be conquered by the English, and the English by the Normans, and the Britons were destined to rule again. Now, however, the conquest by the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans became explicit in the Prose *Brut* and other chronicles that gave the later history of England. Only the last part, the return of the Britons to power, was unfulfilled, and, in fact, many of the *Brut* manuscripts omitted the prophecy to Cadwallader that the Britons would occupy the island again.¹⁹

Only in the conclusion to the story of Arthur does the Prose *Brut* suggest that the Britons might someday return to power. When Arthur realizes that he "miȝt no longer regne," he asks his kinsman Constantine to be king "til þat he come aȝeyne." Arthur has himself carried in a "liter to Auyoun, to bene heled of his wondes; and ȝitte þe Britons supposen þat he Leueþ in a-nopere lande, and þat he shal come ȝit and conquere al Britaigne." This was Merlin's prophecy, and, "men weten nouȝt wheþer þat he leueþ or is dede" (2. 90–91). As Tamar Drukker points out, Arthur's presentation in the *Brut* is ambivalent: "on the one hand, Arthur is real enough to be physically wounded, and on the other, his body is never found and he has neither tomb nor shrine."²⁰ All of the other kings die, but Arthur disappears without a trace in the twenty-second year of his reign in the year 546. The Prose *Brut* explains that Constantine is appointed king since Arthur had no heir, and for emphasis, adds a statement suggested by Wace, but perhaps inserted here to counter the French romances that maintained that Mordred was Arthur's son rather than just his nephew: "grete harme was hit þat soche a noble Kyng, and so doughty, hade none childe of his body bigeten" (1. 91). As in Geoffrey's account, after Arthur's disappearance to Avalon, Mordred's two sons are envious of Constantine and wage war against him; but Constantine slays both, one at London and the other at Winchester.²¹

While Arthur's defeat could be seen simply as a military disaster, the Prose *Brut* implies that it was destined to happen: "[A]l þing þat God wil haue done, most bene done, Whos name ben blessedde wiþouten ende!" (1. 91). Thus the story in the Prose *Brut* ends with elements that would have appealed to medieval readers: an allusion to the popularly held belief that Arthur might return and conquer "al Britaigne" (1. 90) and the suggestion that his death was a part of God's inscrutable plan, part of the

design of history. The reference to Arthur's return would have appealed to the English as well as the Welsh, for the English had appropriated the legend of Arthur's return and used it for their own ends, often interpreting the prophecy that Arthur might return to mean not, as the Welsh hoped, that the original King Arthur would return but, as *Lazamon* put it, not "Arthur," but "an Arður," who would help the English ("Anglen"), not the Britons.²² This is the spin that those later kings of Welsh descent Edward IV and Henry VII put on the prophecy, with Henry VII hoping to do just that by naming his first son Arthur.

II

An obvious contrast between Hardyng's chronicle and the Prose *Brut* is that Hardyng wrote his work not in prose but in the seven-line stanza known as rhyme royal that Chaucer had invented and that other fifteenth-century authors had also used. Why Hardyng chose to write in verse is somewhat puzzling since few fifteenth-century English writers were less capable of writing poetry, and prose would have been much easier for him. He was an old man when he wrote the two versions of his chronicle, with the final version probably left incomplete when he died at the age of about eighty-seven, since a number of stanzas at the end appear to have been completed by different scribes, possibly agents of Edward IV eager to put the chronicle into circulation as propaganda for the king.²³ Hardyng may have considered verse the more traditional way to present vernacular history, since most chronicles written in English up until the fifteenth century had been written in verse.²⁴ Moreover, in his first version he hoped to impress Henry VI, and he may have been thinking of Lydgate's rhyme royal verses on the kings of England that were written as propaganda for Henry.²⁵ Perhaps most important, however, was that verse would have given Hardyng greater flexibility in the material that he included in his chronicle. Although standards of historical truth then were not what they are now, a chronicler was limited as to what he might add, and much of the criticism of Geoffrey of Monmouth's fabrications was due to his having written them in Latin prose, the language of historical truth. The truth of Hardyng's chronicle has certainly been questioned,²⁶ and with justification, since unlike other chroniclers he grafted onto the traditional chronicle story of Arthur elements from two thirteenth-century French prose romances, the *Queste del Saint Graal* and the *Mort Artu*. By writing his chronicle in verse, Hardyng may have been thinking of semi-historical works like Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and *Troy Book* that had moral value but

whose factual content could in part be questioned. Hardyng's ability to change the truth would have been more restricted with contemporary events, but he had greater freedom with older material.

Hardyng probably told his story of Arthur not so much because it represented historical truth as because he saw it as a moral exemplum. It appears in both versions of Hardyng's chronicle. Hardyng mentions Avalon in the first version, but nevertheless maintains that Arthur was buried at Glastonbury. There is also a marginal note that gives the Latin epitaph "*Hic jacet Arthurus, rex quondam, rexque futurus*" (Lansdowne 204, fol. 86v), "Here lies Arthur, the once and future king," and Hardyng mentions that Merlin said there would be doubts about Arthur's death. In the second version he omits the Latin epitaph and reference to Merlin and simply says that in 542 Arthur died in Avalon, which is Glastonbury (147), and unlike the Prose *Brut*, he does not allude to Arthur's return. He had a number of predecessors who, although generally faithful to Geoffrey's account, also dropped the reference to Arthur's return from Avalon. Arthur's body had supposedly been discovered at Glastonbury in 1191, about fifty-five years after the appearance of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and, although some chronicles like the Prose *Brut* retained Geoffrey's conclusion to the story, others, like Hardyng, told of Arthur's being buried at Glastonbury.²⁷

Hardyng sees the death of Arthur as especially tragic. Probably drawing upon the enthusiastic portrait of Arthur in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*,²⁸ Hardyng idealizes Arthur as a king whose reign made earth seem like heaven (126). He asked why God, who had foresight of the tragedy, allowed it to happen, and he blames Arthur's fall upon the fickleness of Fortune and upon the unnatural treachery of Guenevere and Mordred (148–49). Treachery like theirs, in fact, represents a theme that Hardyng uses elsewhere in his chronicle: as Sarah Peverley points out, the responsibility for good governance rests not just with the king, but also with the king's subjects.²⁹ Although his Arthur is idealized, one can read into the story a warning to kings to beware of whom they trust. Hardyng's account offers a good example of what Lee Patterson, in his discussion of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, has referred to as medieval writers' use of the past "as a storehouse of disconnected and timeless *exempla* that assume authority precisely because they are no longer timebound."³⁰ For Hardyng, the finality of Arthur's death is an important part of the exemplum he is presenting. Although one cannot do much about Fortune, one can be wary of trusting others. This warning about treacherous kinsmen would have been relevant in the fifteenth century, for Hardyng, like Malory after him,

surely saw an analogy between the fall of Arthur's kingdom and the feuds between Yorkists and Lancastrians. The complex question of causality in the downfall of Malory's Arthur is considered in the [next chapter](#) of this volume. To Hardyng, for his part, the important point of Arthur's story is not that the king might someday return, nor even that Fortune is fickle, but that treachery can destroy a kingdom.

III

The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* was written after the *Prose Brut* and before Hardyng's chronicle. The author refers to his sources as "romawns" (3200, 3440) and as "cronycles" (3218, 3445) and to his own account as a "storye" (25), probably meaning "historical narrative." With the author assuming that his audience is familiar with the Arthurian story in the chronicles, the Alliterative *Morte* begins close to the end, at the point where Arthur's celebration of his victories is interrupted by the arrival of emissaries from Rome who demand tribute. As in the chronicles, Arthur insists that he owes the Romans nothing, and after appointing Mordred regent and guardian of Guenevere, he answers their demand by going to the Continent and defeating the Romans. When he is about to march into Rome to be crowned emperor, he hears news of Mordred's rebellion and Guenevere's adultery with Mordred and returns home to fight Mordred. Despite having only 1800 men to Mordred's 60,000, he nevertheless destroys Mordred's army. In the final battle Mordred and Arthur kill one another. Arthur is taken to Glastonbury, where a physician from Salerno, rather than Celtic fairies, treats Arthur's wounds but is unable to heal him. As in Hardyng's chronicle, there is no suggestion that Arthur will someday return.

Much interest has focused on possible historical allusions to Edward III's wars on the Continent and to events in Richard II's reign³¹ and on the author's familiarity with medieval military tactics³² and with European geography, particularly that of Italy.³³ Some have seen ambivalence in the poet's portrayal of Arthur and of the war he conducts.³⁴ Although some do not believe that Arthur's fall is presented as punishment for sins,³⁵ others believe that the author was harshly criticizing Arthur's actions.³⁶ The latter have emphasized the brutality of the battle scenes which show Arthur, after defeating the Romans, going on a rampage through Italy, where he hammers "[c]hirches and chapels" and "[m]ynsteris and mason dewes . . . to þe erthe" [holy buildings and hospitals . . . to the ground] (3038–39); he "turmentez þe pople" (3153), and "[s]poylles dispetouslye and spillis their

vynes" [pitilessly plunders and despoils their vines] (3159). Although Arthur in this work is at times, as in the Prose *Brut*, a Christian hero fighting the heathen, at others, in the opinion of some, he is a brutal conqueror whose penchant for destruction and slaughter of the innocent is unjustified.

Scholars have devoted much attention to identifying the sources the author drew upon: French *chansons de geste*, English works of the fourteenth-century alliterative revival, travel literature, and perhaps the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. The author also knew the French prose *Mort Artu*, from which he took the title announced in his opening line, "Here begynnnes Morte Arthure." His closing words, "as þe Bruytte tellys" (4346), refer to the chronicles he used, which Hamel has identified as those of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Laȝamon, and Robert Mannyng.³⁷ The sources he mentions first and last, the French *Mort Artu* and the chronicles, are the most important. The French *Mort Artu* is an intertext whose influence includes Arthur's having a dream of Fortune's wheel, Arthur and Mordred killing one another, and the lack of any hope of Arthur's return. Moreover, the French work would have influenced the English poet's conception of an Arthur who, besides being a valiant warrior, is a combination of strengths and weaknesses and who pushes on through pride even when it would have been wiser not to do so.

In the Alliterative *Morte*, as Arthur prepares to lead his troops into Rome, he boasts "We sall be ouerlynge of all þat on the erthe lengez!" [We shall be overlord of everything on earth] (3211); but shortly after this, he has a dream in which the beautiful lady Fortune hurls him down from the top of her wheel. A wise man then tells him that his good fortune has passed and that he shall achieve no more (3394–95). He explains:

*Thow has schedde myche blode, and schalkes distroyede,
Sakeles, in cirquytrie, in sere kynges landis.
Schryfe the of thy schame and schape for thyn ende!*

(3398–500)

You have shed much blood and destroyed warriors
Without just cause, in arrogance, in various kings' lands.
Confess your dishonor and prepare for death!

Although the wise man predicts that Arthur will be remembered "for dedis of armes / For þe doughtyeste þat euer was duelland in erthe" [For deeds of arms / as the most valiant that ever lived on earth] (3442–43), he nevertheless advises him to consider his "vnreasonable [unjust] dedis" (3452):

Ore the repenttes full rathe all thi rewthe werkes;
 Mane, amende thy mode or thow myshappen,
 And meekly aske mercy for mede of thy saule!

(3453–55)

Or very soon you will repent your brutal acts.
 Man, amend your mood before you come to grief,
 And meekly ask for mercy for the benefit of your soul.

Fortune is here a more purposeful force than the capricious one depicted by Hardyng, and the author's conception of Fortune would have been indebted to the French *Mort Artu*.

In the French work, Fortune, a beautiful lady as in the Alliterative *Morte*, tells Arthur that "*tel sont li orgueil terrien qu'il n'i a nul si haut assiz qu'il ne le coviegne cheoir de la poesté del monde*" [such is earthly pride that no one is seated so high that he can avoid having to fall from power in the world]. Arthur receives three warnings that he should not pursue the battle against Mordred until Lancelot arrives to help. Gawain tells him: "*se vos i assemblez, vos i morroiz ou vos seroiz navrez a mort*" [if you fight against (Mordred) you will die or be mortally wounded]. An archbishop warns Arthur to turn back "*por sauveté de vostre ame et de vostre cors et del reigne*" [for the safety of your soul and your body and your kingdom], but Arthur insists that he will never turn back. He then sees a prophetic inscription that Merlin had written years before predicting the destruction of Arthur and his kingdom if he persists in fighting Mordred; but Arthur says, "*se il m'en meschiet, ce sera par mon pechié et par mon outrage*" [If it turns out badly for me that will be a result of my sin and my folly]. The Arthur of the French *Mort Artu* sees Fortune not as a capricious force but as one that is punishing him: he describes her as a stepmother who "*me fet user le remenant de ma vie en douleur et en corrouz et en tristesse*" [is making me devote the remainder of my life to grief and anger and sadness].³⁸ The French author was showing on the one hand heroic valor commonly found in medieval literature and on the other the folly of pride that stands in the way of prudence.

Similarly, in the Alliterative *Morte* Arthur's fall can be seen as caused not by the whim of Fortune, as in Hardyng, but possibly as punishment, an interpretation that is reinforced by Arthur's lament when he sees that Gawain has been killed and says, "He es sakles, supprysede for syn of myn one" [He is innocent, subdued by my own sin] (3986). Arthur's reference to his sin could, as Hamel suggests, refer to pride that "led Arthur to extend his career of conquest and thus to give Mordred his opportunity

for usurpation,"³⁹ but it could also refer to other misdeeds, the pitiless acts for which the wise man had admonished him.

Arthur's final words reinforce the ambiguity of his portrait:

*And sythen merke manly to Mordrede children,
That they bee sleyghely slayne and slongen in watyrs –
Latt no wykkyde wede waxe ne wrythe one this erthe!*
(4320–22)

And then boldly see that Mordred's children
Are secretly slain and slung into the river:
Let no wicked weed grow nor flourish on this earth!

He follows this by forgiving "all greffe" [wrongs] (4324) and hoping that all will turn out well for Guenevere ["3ife Waynor hafe wele wroghte, wele hir betydde"] (4325). Then he says "In manus" [Into (your) hands, (Father, I commit my spirit)], the words of Christ as he was dying on the cross (Luke 23:46); and "thus passes his speryt, and spekes he no more" [And so his spirit passes away and he speaks no more] (4326–27), a line that also echoes Luke 23:46: "And having said this, he breathed his last" (Vulgate: *Et haec dicens, expiravit*).

The depiction of Mordred's offspring as children, as indicated by the line, "Let no wicked weed grow nor flourish on this earth," does not appear in earlier accounts of Arthur's death. In the chronicles, Mordred's sons are grown and rebel against Arthur's successor Constantine, who destroys them; in the French *Mort Artu* they are also warriors whom Lancelot and Bors kill. Here, however, they are children, at least one of whom is an infant.⁴⁰ While on the one hand Arthur's dying speech presents a familiar deathbed scene in which an angry man, like Chaucer's Arcite, makes peace with those around him and commends his soul to God, on the other in ordering the deaths of Mordred's children, he is committing one of the worst sins – infanticide. Juxtaposed to the echoes of Christ's words on the cross are sinister biblical echoes, possibly to Herod and the slaughter of the innocents but, with its reference to having the children "slongen in watyrs," more specifically to another villain, Pharaoh, and to his instructions to kill the male babies of the Hebrews because he (like Arthur) sees them as a future threat: "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river" [*Praecepit ergo Pharaon omni populo suo, dicens: Quidquid masculini sexus natum fuerit, in flumen projice*] (Exodus 1:22; King James Version; Vulgate).⁴¹

Admittedly there could be some ambiguity in Arthur's actions in killing Mordred's children since J. G. Bellamy notes that, in France, at least, a

convicted traitor's children might also be killed, the argument being that "the crime of treason was so horrible that the traitor's offspring . . . ought to be destroyed with him."⁴² Bellamy, however, does not present this as a common practice, nor does he indicate how old the children would be. He does not say it was done in England. Bracton notes that in England the heirs of those convicted of *lèse-majesté* could be disinherited and "are hardly permitted their lives," but he also says that under English law the crime of the father can impose no stigma on the son and indicates that children under the age of twelve are not subject to the law.⁴³ Arthur's order could be compared to the killing of Hugolino's children in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* and Dante's *Inferno* (33.1–90), and it adds to the questionable nature of Arthur's character.⁴⁴ Jean Frappier, in a discussion of Arthur's death in the French *Mort Artu*, sees ambiguity in the fate of Arthur's soul. At first he seems to be rejected by God and belongs instead to the Celtic pagan world; but at the end when he is buried in consecrated ground, he seems to have been accepted by the Christian God.⁴⁵ There is similar ambiguity in the Alliterative *Morte's* account of Arthur's death. Forgiving most of his enemies and being buried at Glastonbury suggests that he has made peace with God; yet as he surrenders his soul to Christ, he commits a sin that would seem to be a continuation of the "flagrant misdeeds" and "pitiless acts" for which the wise man had rebuked him.

Elizabeth Archibald cites exempla that tell of those committing infanticide being destined for hell and also discusses infanticide as a sin frequently associated with incest in exempla designed to show "how deeply the sinner is mired in sin."⁴⁶ The blood relationship between Arthur and Mordred in this work – and thus the question of incest – is unclear. We do not know if Mordred is simply Arthur's nephew, as in the chronicles, or if he is Arthur's illegitimate son, as in the French *Mort Artu*, or if he is the son conceived through an incestuous relationship between Arthur and his half-sister, as in other romances of the French Vulgate Cycle or, rather improbably, if he is the incestuously conceived son of Arthur and his sister, as in the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*.⁴⁷ The Alliterative *Morte* suggests that he may be more than a nephew: Gawain, when urging his men to fight against Mordred, says "of siche a[n] engendure full littyll joye happyns" [From such an origin very little joy comes to pass] (3743) and refers to him as "Fals fostered foode" (3776), which can mean "false nursling" or "false foster child." References to him as "Malebranche" (4062, 4174), once thought to mean bastard but now simply "wicked offspring," could suggest that he is Arthur's child to an audience familiar with the French accounts. Arthur refers to him as "a childe of my

chambyre" whom he has "chastyede and chosen" [brought up properly and chosen (or recognized)] (690). Like so much else in this romance, the relationship between Arthur and Mordred is uncertain, probably deliberately so, and the audience's interpretation could depend upon their previous acquaintance with Arthurian stories, whether they knew just the English chronicles (nephew), whether they knew the French *Mort* (illegitimate son), or whether they knew other French prose romances (nephew and son).⁴⁸

Aside from Arthur, Mordred is the most interesting character in this work, and he has more complexity here than in any other medieval account. Although he remains the treacherous villain of the Arthurian chronicles, he is also aware of his weaknesses and is reluctant to become regent when Arthur leaves for Rome. He tells Arthur "for charyté cheese 3ow anoþer, / For if 3e putte me in þis plytte 3owre pople es dyssauyde" [as an act of kindness choose another / For if you put me in this position, your people will be deceived] (682–83). He is, he adds, too weak to "presente a prynce astate" [to serve as a prince] (684). In refusing to grant his request, Arthur has additional responsibility for the destruction of his kingdom.⁴⁹

Later, in the final battle, Mordred praises his brother Gawain as "makles one molde" [unmatched on earth], "the gracioseste gome that vndire God lyffede" [the most honorable warrior that lived on God's earth] (3875, 3877). After Mordred kills Gawain, the author writes: "þat traytour alls tite teris lete he fall" [that traitor at once let his tears fall] (3886). Then he

*Went wepand away and weries the stowndys
 Ðat euer his werdes ware wroghte siche wandrethe to wyrke.
 Whene he thoghte on þis thyng, it thirllede his herte;
 For sake of his sybb blode sygheande he rydys. . .
 He remyd and repent hym of all his rewthe werkes.*
 (3888–91, 3894)

Went weeping away and curses the time
 That his destiny doomed him to bring about such misery.
 When he thought on these things, it pierced his heart;
 He rides away sighing because of his kinsman. . .
 He wept and repented all his brutal deeds.

Mordred's brief expression of remorse corresponds to the previously mentioned lament that Arthur makes several lines later in which Gawain's death is said to have been caused by Arthur's own sin (3986). In Mordred's case, however, the author says that his destiny caused him to bring about

such misery (3889). That does not mean that Mordred would not be punished for what he did or that he did not have free will or that he was not evil, but his being destined to play that role perhaps makes him somewhat sympathetic.

Arthur refers to destiny, that "inexorable force that shapes and controls events and men's lives,"⁵⁰ a few times with reference to himself and his men: "If me be destaynede to dye at Dryghtynns wyll" [If I am destined to die according to the will of God] (664); "Desteny and doughtynes of dedys of armes, / All es demyd and delte at Dryghtynez will" [Destiny and valor in deeds of arms / are all rewarded according to God's will] (1563–64); "3if vs be destaynede to dy to-daye one this erthe, / We sall be hewede vnto heuen or we be halfe colde" [If we are destined to die today on this field / we shall be heaved unto heaven before we are half-cold] (4090–91); "Qwy then [ne] hade Dryghttyyn destaynede at His dere will / Pat He hade demyd me to-daye to dy for 3ow all?" [Why then had God not destined it for me through his precious will / to die today for you all?] (4157–58); "þe Dryghtten be louede, / That vs has destaynede and demyd to dye in oure awen!" [May the lord be praised / who has destined us to die in our own land!] (4305–6). Unlike the Arthur of the *Prose Brut* who simply disappears and whose end is uncertain, Arthur in this work is emphatically destined to die, and his return is never mentioned. Moreover, he is never said to have been destined to act in either a good or a bad way. While Mordred was destined to behave treacherously, we are not told that Arthur was destined to conquer more than was necessary, to destroy hospitals and churches, or to murder children.

The Alliterative *Morte* raises the question of the extent to which traditional narratives permit complexity in characterizations if they are to be popular. Northrop Frye remarks that characters tend to be polarized in romance: the genre avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life, where everything is a mixture of good and evil, and the popularity of romance has much to do with its simplification of moral facts. Heroes and villains represent two contrasting worlds, one above the level of ordinary experience, which Frye calls the idyllic, and the other below it, which he calls demonic.⁵¹ This polarization, however, is more applicable to the *Prose Brut* and Hardyng's chronicle than the Alliterative *Morte*, in which it is more difficult to distinguish between good and evil. Even Mordred has some redeeming qualities, and Arthur has some that would associate him more with Frye's demonic world than with the idyllic. The Alliterative *Morte* would not have met the expectations of many in the audience of what a romance should be, nor would it have met their expectations of how Arthur should be presented.

When the Arthur of the alliterative work is measured against the Arthurs of the Prose *Brut* and Hardyng's chronicle, striking contrasts appear. Neither of the chroniclers emphasizes the unjustified brutality of warfare as *Morte Arthure* does; neither presents an Arthur who sees a vision of the wheel of fortune and is told that he has shed much blood needlessly; and neither presents a dying Arthur who commits infanticide. Although at the end the author of the Alliterative *Morte* cites as a source a *Brut* chronicle, his audience would have been struck by the contrast with the Arthur of the chronicles. Scholars have debated the portrait of Arthur in this work, and the author, I believe, intended Arthur to be a complex mix of both good and bad. At times the audience would have sympathized with him, as, for example, when he receives the Roman emperor's unjust demand for tribute, when he fights the giant of St. Michael's Mount, and when he returns to Britain to fight the usurper Mordred. On the other hand, the emphasis on unnecessary bloodshed and cruelty and his destruction of hospitals and churches could have been seen as more than just a realistic picture of medieval warfare, and the wise man's admonition that Arthur's good fortune has ended would have been added for a purpose. Some, moreover, would have seen the irony of the conclusion in which Arthur, just before forgiving Guenevere and commending himself to the hands of Christ, commits the sin of infanticide. It would have presented a conspicuous contrast to more idealized portraits of Arthur and would have been controversial and perhaps not well liked.

For the Arthurian story in the three works discussed here, the chronology would have been essentially the same as that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with the date of Arthur's death varying between 542 and 546, although in the two chronicles the story is presented within the context of all of British and English history, not as an isolated tragedy. The presentation of causality, Fortune, and destiny differs markedly in the three works. According to the Prose *Brut*, Arthur is a great king whose fall resulted from Mordred's treachery, and this is presented without much commentary. The only interpretation that the author presents is his lament that "soche a noble Kyng, and so doughty" had no heir, but he adds "but al þing þat God wil haue done, moste bene done" (1. 91), thus implying that this was due to the inscrutable will of God, to destiny. Hardyng is more explicit: the good king's fall was caused by capricious Fortune and Mordred and Guenevere, and the story is an exemplum warning against treacherous subjects. In the Alliterative *Morte* the cause of Arthur's fall is more complex. As in Hardyng, Fortune contributes to his fall, but she no longer seems to be a capricious force but rather an agent of God who is possibly

punishing Arthur. The only character presented as destined to act in the way he did is, oddly enough, Mordred, and this makes him momentarily sympathetic. Nothing Arthur does is said to be due to destiny except his being destined to die. Of the four chronicles the author drew upon – those of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Lazamon, and Mannyng – only Mannyng tells of Arthur's death and burial at Glastonbury, although he also mentions the Britons' belief in Arthur's journey to Avalon. The others all suggest Arthur's possible return. It is probably the omission of any reference to Arthur's return in the *Alliterative Morte* that caused someone other than the poet to write at the end of the one surviving manuscript "*Hic jacet Arthurus, rex quondam rexque futurus*" [Here lies Arthur, the once and future king]. That, however, was not part of the original work, and it represents a contemporary reader's emphatic response to the poet's having left something out. As in *Hardyng*, nothing in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* suggests that Arthur is destined to return, but in the latter neither is there much to suggest that it would be particularly desirable for him to do so.

*Arthur in transition: Malory's Morte Darthur**Helen Cooper*

Malory's *Morte Darthur*, completed in 1469–70 and printed by William Caxton in the summer of 1485, stands at the cusp of a number of intersecting ideologies and traditions, all of them carrying significance for political and literary history. It both marked and encouraged the shift from verse to prose as the normative medium for English-language fiction. It epitomized the point of transition for the primary dissemination of texts from manuscript to print. Although we think of it as a quintessentially medieval work, Caxton completed his edition just three weeks before the battle of Bosworth provided not just a change of regime but a symbolic marker for the shift from the Middle Ages to the early modern era, with the extinction of the Plantagenet line and the arrival of the Tudors: it has indeed been dubbed “the wrong book at the wrong time.”¹ It brought together the historical tradition of Arthurian material based on Geoffrey of Monmouth with the romance tradition developed predominantly in French, so offering for the first time a single narrative of Arthur that turned the work into a new originary text for all future Arthurian material in English. Writers in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (there is comparatively little Arthurian material in between) used Malory as consciously as he had used his own sources, and with at least as great a concern as Malory himself for shifting the import of what they found in their predecessors to yield new meanings. As the distance from Malory's own text increased, by the middle of the twentieth century or thereabouts, Arthur had developed enough cultural momentum to be generating further stories without direct reference back to the *Morte*. If nothing else at all survived from the Middle Ages, Malory's work would be sufficient to support almost the entire phenomenon of medievalism. The work itself may be much less familiar than *Hamlet*, but its spin-offs, from films and children's stories to occult websites, T-shirts and excaliburgers, far exceed anything generated by any of Shakespeare's plays.

So much is going on around Malory's work, in the radical change of direction he gives to his material, the significance of its historical moment,

and the extraordinary cultural phenomenon of Arthurianism to which it gave rise, that it can be hard to see the *Morte* on its own terms, as it might have appeared to Malory himself and his very earliest readers – that necessarily small number of people who read it in manuscript, with no awareness of the series of revolutions that were about to alter their world for ever. We can indeed identify only five such readers, and four of those are anonymous. Two are the scribes of the sole surviving manuscript copy of the *Morte*, whose different responses to the text may, if they were not just copying what they found in their exemplar, be preserved in the episodes signalled in the notes in its margins, together with a third hand that also made occasional small corrections.² The fourth is the person, his or her identity hidden behind the passive participle, by whom a copy was “delivered” to Caxton and so made available for printing, and about whom we know nothing except a presumed Arthurian interest; and the fifth is Caxton himself. Caxton's preface constitutes much the fullest and most interesting early response, but it inevitably emphasizes the work's reception by a new community of readers over his own immediate reaction to the text. His editorial work on it – the division into chapters, the provision of a list of contents for those, and, if it was indeed his and not Malory's own, his rewriting of the Roman War section³ – are likewise aimed at making the work more market-friendly. He also refers in his preface to a further group of “many noble and dyvers gentylmen of thys royaume of Englund”⁴ who kept urging him that he should print the stories of Arthur and the Grail, but there is no suggestion that they knew of the *Morte* itself. As he makes plain, everyone knew that the stories existed in various continental languages, especially French, but he seems to have thought it an unexpected stroke of good fortune that a comprehensive English version turned up just at the moment he needed it.

Those first four readers experienced the *Morte* in one world; thousands more read it in a world that had changed, and that has kept on changing. Studies of the work for long found it easier to look at it as the end of the chivalric world that gave rise to it, or the beginning of the medievalist movement that it inspired, than to see it as a work of the 1460s. Its translation of violence into prowess seems too distanced from the self-interested brutality of the squabbles of the late fifteenth century, or indeed from its author's own biography, to make direct comparison possible. Only one remark in the whole work, on the political instability of the English (a remark discussed further below), is easily extractable as a reflection of his own age, though it is a telling one: Malory sees in Mordred's attempt to seize the crown and the resulting civil war a

reflection of the Wars of the Roses that he was himself living through. Most often his interests chime much more closely with the contemporary fashion for “great books,” anthologies of chivalric rites and materials, commissioned by various of the gentry and aristocracy at just this same period,⁵ but those too have something of an air of quaint nostalgia about them, an attempt to preserve an ideal of life that was already extinct outside fiction, fantasy, and archaizing courtly ritual.

It is widely assumed that the *Morte* was already old-fashioned when it was produced: that it looked backwards, not outwards, and that its element of nostalgia for a vanished world indicates its own consciousness of that. Arthurian writings, however, had always been nostalgic. The world Arthur represented was always in the past, whether Geoffrey’s world of triumphant British conquest or the distant golden age of chivalry of Chrétien de Troyes and his successors. The fact that Malory’s sources were mostly a quarter of a millennium old when he came to adapt them would seem to confirm the increasing depth of that nostalgia. Yet he was also in the forefront of fashion. His work signals the decisive acceptance of prose as the dominant form of fiction, and in making that move Malory was fully in tune with the contemporary fashion for prose at the Burgundian court with which Edward IV had increasingly close connections. Caxton, arriving in England from Bruges, found in the *Morte* the ideal text to endorse his own enthusiasm for the new fashion, leaving it to his successors to print the traditional English verse romances. The work was, moreover, the first Arthurian prose romance to be printed in any language; it was only after Caxton’s English initiative that the various sections of the French *Lancelot–Grail*, composed early in the thirteenth century and continuously widely read in manuscript, started tumbling from the printing presses of France. None of these were humanist works, in content, style, range of reference, or anything else; but although Malory can hardly be blamed for not predicting that the intellectual shock wave advancing across Europe was about to overwhelm the academic circles of England too, the *Morte* is none the less a precursor of the program of the “writing of England” that became increasingly important as the sixteenth century progressed. Outside England, writers in humanist circles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had their own ways of making romance an expression of regional and national concerns, a development considered in [Chapter 10](#) of this volume. But already in the closing years of the English Middle Ages, one of the emphases of Malory’s work was to turn Arthur into an English king, as distinct from the ethnically British monarch of the chronicle tradition or the sovereign within a fantasy geography of the French romances. The

realm of Malory's Arthur is geographically huge: his subject kings include those of Scotland and Ireland and the rulers of large swathes of France, and his career of European conquest that Malory adopts from Geoffrey extends it even further. There remains none the less a marked sense that his Arthur is first and foremost English, and other English writers often appear to take the same shift for granted. Arthur had been named as one of the Nine Worthies since the inception of the grouping early in the fourteenth century, but the English had never made much of the fact; Malory, as Caxton recognized, at last gave Arthur a textual status worthy of the great national hero. Henry VII's son Arthur was both British and English.

The new fashion for literature that owed an overt debt to the Classics may have pushed Malory away from the humanist limelight early in the sixteenth century, but the five editions published in the century and a half after Caxton indicate that there was continuing enthusiasm for it: an enthusiasm confirmed by the regular deploring of such tastes by university-educated writers, from Ascham's famous condemnation of the story's immorality ("manslaughter and bold bawdry") forwards. Yet when Spenser needed a protagonist for his nationalist romance-epic, *The Faerie Queene*, a work modelled generically and poetically on the new continental humanist fashions, he chose Arthur: not a very Malorian Arthur, certainly, since he has become allegorical, and since the poem is set before he accedes to the throne and therefore while his future is as yet unwritten and unfixed, but the choice would have been impossible if the *Morte* had not existed. Milton considered writing an Arthurian epic, perhaps because of his admiration for Spenser, but he could hardly have contemplated it without a knowledge of Malory as well as the chronicle tradition. Tennyson, writing his *Idylls of the King* in an age of empire, looked to the *Morte* as his inspiration and primary source down to echoes of verbal detail, even while he altered its balance to make the collapse of all the political and social ideals that his king had tried to promote cast its long shadow backwards over his whole reign. Modern Arthuriana has tended to divide into the outright fantastic, largely aimed at children, and the feminist or the parodic and sceptical, for more adult audiences; but even scepticism requires something that claims authoritative status for it to be sceptical of, and Malory's figure of Arthur is always implicit in the background even for writers who show no sign of having read him.

As has often been noted, the French romances on which Malory drew enjoyed no such afterlife. That infinitely renewing figure of an English Arthur is at odds with what happened to his French prototype. French

reprints ceased around the middle of the sixteenth century, their demise hastened by the humanist derision that saw them as reading fit for adolescent girls,⁶ though the fashion for chivalric romance was simply displaced, in France as in England, onto the still more fantastic *Amadis de Gaule* and its sequels.⁷ The French Arthurian romances never enjoyed the Romantic rediscovery that promoted Malory back to the center of cultural attention. There was no nationalist agenda to promote him, and the French emphasis on Reason was at odds with the ethos of the *Lancelot-Grail*; but Reason never entirely obliterated Sentiment, and it still seems odd that the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, invariably treated in French with much more emotional detail than in Malory (and only very rarely treated elsewhere in English in the Middle Ages), should have disappeared from cultural visibility.

There were, however, further reasons why Malory should have been so inspirational when his sources were not, and those have to do with the anomalous nature of the *Morte* itself. It is as easy to write about the specific historical resonances of its predecessors and successors as it is difficult to write about Malory's; but that very opaqueness makes it uniquely open to appropriation. The writers of the *Lancelot-Grail*, not least of the *Grail* sections of the cycle and the *Mort Artu*, have a clear moral purpose, Spenser an overt nationalist purpose, and it is impossible to read Tennyson in other than consciously Victorian terms; but Malory does not bring any interpretation with him. The miracle of transubstantiation made visible, when first composed for the French *Queste del Saint Graal*, reflects the redefinition of the doctrine of the Eucharist arrived at in the Fourth Lateran Council a decade or so earlier. Its reappearance in Malory *might* reflect a continuing concern with such matters in the wake of Lollardy, but it might well just be adopted from his source as a pious commonplace. There is remarkably little critical, or even historical, consensus about him, beginning with the contradictions of his life of crime against the high chivalry of his writings. It is impossible to be sure of his sympathies in the great clash between Lancastrians and Yorkists; indeed, given the shifting nature of allegiances in the Wars of the Roses (not least those of the greatest local magnate in his home region, Warwick the Kingmaker) and the many local squabbles they subsumed, it would be ahistorical to expect consistency, even if Malory took a strong view on the descent of the crown.⁸ His own career of repeated imprisonment and exclusions by name from general pardons may have little to do with his own or anyone else's political partisanship, though it does show that none of the magnates was at all eager to act consistently as his "good lord." Very nearly his only

overtly political comment in the whole *Morte* is his castigation of the English for changing allegiance too easily from Arthur to Mordred:

Lo ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was? . . . Alas! thys ys a greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thyng us please no terme (xxi.1)⁹

– but the stricture notably fails to specify who he thinks might be the rightful king of England: the formulation allows for Arthur to represent either Henry VI or Edward IV, and Mordred either of those, or indeed Warwick. In the year he completed the work, “the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth,” March 1469 – March 1470, Edward was effectively imprisoned by Warwick, who attempted to take over the government; but the attempt was unsupported by any popular consent, and the king was speedily able to reassert his authority and drive the earl into exile. A few weeks into the next regnal year, Edward himself was forced to flee the country to make way for the mindless Henry VI to be paraded through the streets of London and briefly restored to the throne. Malory could not, of course, have predicted the unprecedented return of a deposed king, let alone two in rapid succession. But he was certainly well aware, as he wrote those final folios, that Edward’s own rule was dangerously contested, and that England held a notional monarch who increasingly found it difficult to assert his authority, an over-mighty subject who could compel him to act as he wished, and a shadow monarch who might at any moment yet claim the throne as his.¹⁰ There is no exact equivalence with the end of the *Morte*, but the parallels are strong enough to break through the surface of Malory’s narrative.

If it is unclear whether Malory wanted one particular king or just any king so long as his rule was stable, his own conception of kingship is almost as difficult to pin down. His broad presentation of Arthur seems to suggest that he is the ideal king, but Merlin is quick to point out his early inadequacies and errors, and the narrative insists at numerous points on his inability to impose his will on his knights. The very lack of any clear political substructure to Arthur’s kingdom, and the total absence of any economic substructure, makes it hard to apply anything Malory says at all closely to the conditions of fifteenth-century England. It is none the less possible to be fairly sure of a few principles that Malory does apply both to Arthur and to his own historical moment – or rather, that he draws from his own contemporary England and applies to his historical narrative. He shows, for instance, an alertness to the evils of magnate factionalism, and of “horizontal” treason between peers such as is much less emphasized in

his sources,¹¹ in the murder of Lamorak by the nastier of Gawain's brothers. He makes no narratorial comment on the murder, though other characters roundly condemn it, but it marks the beginning of the disintegration of the unity of the king's fellowship that will finally prove fatal. Many of these political or ethical principles are, however, most notable for the contradictions of their application: what is approved in one context is shown as being radically inadequate in another. The convertibility of violence between prowess and criminality is perhaps the most famous example,¹² but many of the ideological concepts identifiable in the *Morte* carry a similar double charge. Malory seems fully aware of how good government or a good society might be defined, but he is deeply sceptical as to whether any of those definitions, when put into practice, would actually produce the desired result.

One such principle, explicit in the castigation of his fellow Englishmen, is that the king must be accepted by the people: good rule, or indeed any holding on to the reins of power, requires consent. Even Mordred cannot take power without that; Warwick, in 1469, could not maintain his grasp on it, even when he held a crowned king in his control. The principle is enshrined in English law and custom, and rendered visible – or audible – in the acclamation at the monarch's coronation. Arthur demonstrates his divine acceptability for kingship initially through the miraculous evidence of the sword in the stone, but the lords are "sore agreed" at the prospect, and only kneel to him when the commons insist on having him for their king and threaten anyone who opposes them (1.6–7). Arthur proceeds at once to his coronation, the ceremony that provides the sacral moment of acceptance and at which the lords render homage. That, plus the practical rather than principled military enforcement of his rule across the country, is enough to establish him as king. Mordred adds for his own usurpation the legal and bureaucratic ratification by parliament, or at least by the lords in parliament (xxi.1). The consent that propels the rightful heir, Uther's son, to the throne can thus equally well propel a usurper.

The central feature of the coronation was the oath: the sworn contract by which the king bound himself to his people, most particularly in its requirement that he should govern in accordance with the law. The English monarch, in contrast to the model prevailing in continental Europe, was not an autocrat, as political thinkers from John of Salisbury to Malory's contemporary Sir John Fortescue pointed out.¹³ The oath is the first detail of Arthur's coronation that Malory records, and the only one apart from the swearing of fealty:

And so anon was the coronacyon made, and ther was he sworne unto his lordes and the comyns for to be a true kyng, to stand with true justyce fro thens forth the dayes of this lyf. (1.7)

He immediately sets about restoring justice to his kingdom even before he consolidates his power. Mordred gets himself crowned, but there is no mention of any oath. That Arthur is king under the law is not just a figure of speech, but his determination to rule with true justice does not finally help him. The French *Mort Artu* presents the downfall of the kingdom as divine retribution for sexual sin: Arthur's incestuous begetting of Mordred, and Lancelot's and Guinevere's adultery. Malory, by contrast, is much more inclined, outside the special circumstances of the Grail, to celebrate Lancelot and Guinevere's love for its faithfulness rather than to condemn it for its immorality, as he famously does in the passage original to him in which he contrasts the "sone hote sone colde" love of his own times with the lovers of King Arthur's days, Guinevere among them, "for whom I make here a lyttyll mencion, that whyle she lyved she was a trew lover, and therefor she had a good ende" (xviii.25). The incest that gives rise to Mordred could hardly be given a comparable celebration, but Malory omits any condemnation, noting only Merlin's prophecy that the unwitting act of incest will cause trouble in the future. When that future arrives and the Bishop of Canterbury refers to the incestuous origin of Mordred, the Bishop's rebuke is directed not against the father but against the disloyal son (xxi.1). English literature had to wait another century for retribution for incest to re-enter the picture, in Thomas Hughes's strange revenge tragedy, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, written in the immediate aftermath of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. After the early prophecy of Merlin, Mordred's parentage is not mentioned again in the body of the *Morte* until he is made regent during Arthur's absence to fight Lancelot, and then as a bare fact – "bycause sir Mordred was kynge Arthurs son, he gaff hym the rule off hys londe and off hys wyff" (xx.19). Bare fact becomes more loaded in the one final reference to their relationship, in the final hand-to-hand combat in which both receive fatal wounds, and which condemns not Arthur but Mordred: "ryght so he smote *hys fadir, kynge Arthure*, with hys swerde holdynge in both hys hondys" (xxi.4, my italics). Regicide is bad enough; this is a double treason, of parricide as well.

Writing the consequences of sin out of his work left Malory with a gap in causation for the downfall; and he partially fills it by linking it to Arthur's role as king under the law. The conflict of Lancelot's duty to Arthur as his lord and to Guinevere as his lady has often been noted, by

critics just as it is by Malory; the conflict for Arthur between his duty to the law he is sworn to uphold and his grasp of power has been rather less noted, but it is just as explicit. The rule of law is not much in evidence for most of the work. There is none of the legal paraphernalia of Malory's own time, of lawyers and assizes and justices of the peace. If there is an injustice, it is normally resolved by a knight's questing to sort it out by force and the sending of the defeated party back to the court to submit himself to the king. It is only in the final sections, where a strong sense of historical plausibility takes over from the fantasies of Round Table chivalry, that Malory pulls legal process to the forefront of his narrative. The first instance, which is particularly striking because it makes an implicit contrast with contemporary failings in the judicial system, is his comment that Guinevere is condemned according to the law for the alleged murder of Sir Patrise, "for such custom was used in tho dayes: for favoure, love, nother affinity there sholde be none other but ryghtuous jugemente" regardless of the status of the defendant (xviii.6). "Love" here is less a private relationship than political alliance; "affinity" carries a technical meaning referring to a magnate's incorporation of lower aristocrats and gentry into his power base, a process whereby he would undertake to support them in their quarrels and legal disputes in return for their support in his. The particular point here lies not only in the suggestion that legal process in contemporary England had become divorced from justice, but in Arthur's determination to follow that legal process against his own wishes, and indeed against his own conviction of Guinevere's innocence. That might look at first like an admirable determination on his part to follow his coronation oath; the trouble is that it promises to deliver the wrong outcome, to convict Guinevere even though she is not guilty. A sense of tension between legal procedure and moral evaluation in this episode is apparent already in its presentation in the French *Mort Artu* (see [Chapter 4](#) of this volume), but Malory follows a course of his own. Justice is preserved by Lancelot's last-minute arrival to fight in Guinevere's defense and the revelation of the truth of Patrise's death, but those have nothing to do with Arthur's probity. Trial by combat was all but extinct in Malory's England, but even in Arthur's it can on occasion yield the wrong result, as when King Mark kills the upholder of a "ryghtuous quarell" "by mysadventure" (x.14).

Trial by battle is thus not necessarily the same as a *iudicium Dei*, a judgement of God. Chance can intervene, or when it comes to the crunch, it is the better fighter, not the man in the right, who is likely to win. In the case of the next charge against Guinevere, that she has slept with one of the wounded knights – a charge of which she is again not guilty, but in the

rather more technical sense that it was in fact Lancelot she slept with – Lancelot again clears her name in trial by combat, even with one hand tied behind his back (xix.9): God may be helping him, but he is quite capable of defeating his enemy without any divine aid. The issue comes to a head in the third accusation, after Lancelot has been trapped in her bedroom by Mordred and his followers, when Arthur refuses to let the issue be tried by battle precisely because Lancelot will inevitably win: “And therefore for my quene he shall nevermore fyght, for she shall have the law” (xx.7). It sounds very like the earlier passage in which the king refuses to bend legal process in her favor, but here Malory does not invite the reader’s approval for the king’s action, and Arthur himself shows none of his earlier grief at what is happening: he wants to dispose of her as fast as possible. Gawain, indeed, urgently counsels him to “put hit in respite, thys jougemente” (xx.7), but Arthur will not listen to counsel – itself a recognizable failure of kingship. Malory complicates the justice of the judgement still further by refusing to commit himself as to what actually did happen between the lovers that night; but whatever it was, it is presented as the result of their good and stable love. Mordred by contrast is motivated by hatred, and sets out to ambush Lancelot in the full knowledge that his pretence of fidelity to Arthur will lead to the downfall of the realm. Gawain laments that “now ys thys realme holy destroyed and myscheved, and the noble felyshyp of the Rounde Table shall be disparbeled” (xx.1), but Mordred does not care and Providence does not intervene.

In what follows, the “disparbling” of the Round Table and the kingdom is hastened by the application of the rule of law. “Whether right or wrong” (a phrase insistently repeated across the ensuing action), Lancelot comes to rescue the queen: an action that may contradict the legal decision and amount to an act of rebellion, and therefore a catastrophic aggravation of the treason implicit in his affair with the queen, but which it would be inconceivable for him not to take given that “she shulde be brente for my sake” (xx.5). He succeeds in abducting her, but his killing of Gareth and Gaheris in the process starts a new clash between the law on the one hand and the stability of the kingdom on the other. Arthur is deeply reluctant to pursue this new quarrel against his right-hand warrior, and this time it is Gawain, again in a passage original to Malory and which gets its full resonance only within the English political context, who insists otherwise.

“My kynge, my lorde, and myne uncle,” seyde sir Gawayne, “wyte you well, now I shall make you a promyse whych I shall holde be my knyghthode, that frome thys day forwarde I shall never fayle sir Launcelot untill that one

of us have slayne that othir. And therefore I requyre you, my lorde and kynge, dresse you unto the warres . . . and therefore, as ye wolle have my servyse and my love, now haste you thereto and assay youre frendis.” (xx.10)

Arthur here is often regarded as weak, as giving way to bullying; but Gawain's words, especially his opening words, are chosen carefully. As king, Arthur is bound to uphold the law, and Gareth and Gaheris have been unlawfully killed while following royal orders. As Gawain's lord, his “good lord,” he is bound to uphold Gawain in his quarrels just as Gawain has given him his own “service and love.” And as the uncle of Gawain and his dead brothers, he is also bound to support him in the more atavistic demands of the blood feud. Gawain has the king trapped all three ways. He calls on him to complete the division of the Round Table knights, the Arthurian equivalent of fifteenth-century magnates, into their constituent affinities, a process already started in Mordred's selection of followers for his attempted arrest of Lancelot and Lancelot's own pre-dawn rounding up of his own “friends” (xx.5; earlier passages from the episode of the healing of Sir Urry forwards have already established these groupings of the knights into recognizable affinities). Gawain's demand irremediably divides the Round Table into warring parties, and so confirms the trajectory towards disaster set in motion by Mordred. It is not incest or adultery, or even rival loyalties, that finally leads to the civil war, but the requirement laid on the king to uphold the law even at the cost of losing his crown. The downfall of Arthur had long implied broad questions not only about the causality of events, but also about genres of writing (see [Chapter 7](#)). In the larger, supra-political, structure expected of romance, there would be a shaping providential hand, implicit or explicit, to endorse the right or, as in the French, to punish the sinful; but, by the end of the work, Malory invokes a God who is on Arthur's side only to deny Him any executive power. He is writing history, and medieval divine teleology no longer operates.¹⁴ God may send Gawain to warn Arthur against fighting, but a “destyné” to which even God appears to be subject drives the final disaster (xxi.3–4).

By what process did Malory produce such a shift in meaning, this new reading of the Arthurian world that is at once so closely dependent on its sources and yet so different in interpretation and effect? The idea of writing as reinterpretation is a venerable process: it is there in Virgil's take on the Homeric Trojan War, in Ovid's take on Virgil's Dido, and in the rewritings of Aeneas in the *Roman d'Eneas* or Chaucer's *House of Fame*, and it is carried forward enthusiastically throughout the Middle Ages and indeed

the early modern and modern periods. As the proliferation of Arthurian rewritings illustrates, it has continued alongside the rise of literary criticism, and indeed in this particular case the two have a notable tendency to overlap. Creative writers will produce a version of the Arthurian narrative that shows what Lancelot really felt or what Morgan le Fay really did; critics often claim to do exactly the same. It is the silences in the *Morte* – in any text, as the *Gawain*-poet's reticence about Morgan demonstrates – that invite such interventions; and Malory is very good on silences. When Lancelot approaches the king to return Guinevere to him, "sir Gawayne sate afore hym, and many other grete lordys" (xx.14): the over-mighty baron interposed between the king and the vassal on whose reconciliation the realm depends. When the knight and the queen kneel, there is general weeping, but

the kynge sate styлле and seyde no worde. And whan sir Launcelot saw hys countenance he arose up and pulled up the queene with hym (xx.14),

and embarks on the long speech in which for the first time he attempts to talk, rather than fight, unity back into the kingdom. What is it in Arthur's countenance that leads to Lancelot's response? Is it just that this is the face of the king, the man he has loved and served? Or is it something in Arthur's expression that goes with that stony silence? Malory gives no hint. Fiction-writers can rush in to fill the gap, but the strength of the prose lies in that unspoken hinterland that demands imaginative completion. It is in such moments that the strength of Malory's own imaginative engagement with his material can be glimpsed, even while he holds back from the detail of what he imagined.

There is still a widespread tendency to think of Malory's writing as untutored and therefore naive, undeveloped by contrast with more sophisticated writers (including those who produced the *Lancelot-Grail*). According to this assumption, Malory translated his sources page by page, cutting out everything the narrative did not require, and especially anything resembling theology (in the *Queste*), sentiment (in the *Lancelot*), and morality and rhetorical elaboration everywhere. At the stylistic level, however, it is much harder to simplify than to elaborate; and at the structural level what Malory does is remarkable. It is the subtlety of his selection and rearrangement of passages that gives much of the power to the final sections of the *Morte*. Principal among these are his taking three widely separated incidents from the *Lancelot* and turning them into the triple accusation of Guinevere that leads up to the final war; the ease with which he intercuts English and French sources, the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*

and the prose *Mort Artu*; and the confidence with which he writes original material into an existing matrix, as with Gawain's response to the death of Gareth. All those suggest a rather different process from translation and reduction. The only way he could have produced his work, I suspect – and although this is necessarily hypothetical, it is no more hypothetical than the image of the naive translator – is that he immersed himself over many years in all the Arthurian material he could lay his hands on, that he internalized it and recast it mentally, in a way familiar now from fanzines (such as the interventions in *Star Trek* narratives) or the kind of bedtime stories that many of us will have told ourselves as children after the actual books had been closed and the lights turned out. The most familiar medieval equivalent would be devotional meditation on the events of Christ's life, of the kind urged by Pseudo-Bonaventure and practised with what can seem to modern readers an alarming literalism by Margery Kempe. Malory does not, of course, interject himself into his stories; but something of the same kind of empathy is conveyed in his treatment not only of Lancelot (who in many ways has a greater claim than Arthur to be the central character of the work as a whole), but also of his own new hero Gareth (never more than an auxiliary character in any other extant text but here upgraded to have his own biography written across the work, a biography that is consistently appreciative). Gareth's creation would thus be parallel to the practice of inventing supplements to fill out the Gospel stories: the childhood of Christ, or St. Veronica. All it would need would be for the young Malory to have had a passion for all things Arthurian and a familiarity with other romances such as the English *Ipomadon* (since English romance would be what a child would come to know first). That too tells the story of its hero's transition to adulthood, a process that begins when he conceals his origins and his prowess, continues with his riding in the company of a scornful damsel to rescue his lady from an unwelcome suitor, and includes his jousting in armor of various colors. If Malory had also encountered the English stanzaic *Morte* when he was young, he might well have learned swathes of it by heart: a process that makes more sense of its dominance at the end of the work than any labored switching between French and English manuscript sources.¹⁵

If that idea of Malory's creative processes is right, it shifts his relationship not only to his sources but to history. It leaves intact his common practice of close translation of the longer or less easily memorized texts, but explains the ease and imperceptibility with which he can move away from his various written sources. It explains why he makes no effort to eliminate narrative elements that barely figured in his own world, such as trial by

combat, or to add elements that did, such as all the non-chivalric population, even as he envisages Arthur performing as an English king bound by the constraints of the coronation oath. It would explain too the “yes, but – ” qualities of his retelling, as longer and more experienced meditation on the stories (compare Julian of Norwich, pondering over her visions for many years) complicates unproblematic prowess, and shows that the rule of law does not necessarily produce the best political outcome, or that the consent of the people can as easily promote instability as a grounded consent to authority.

That is why the *Morte Darthur* will outlast all its derivatives and imitations. Other writers may rethink the same material to produce the novel behind the epic, but they do so in order to extract a new and identifiable meaning, like Little Jack Horner with his plum. Malory keeps on pondering, not to fix meaning but to unfix it; and the closer he brings the stories to his own world, the more he moves from fantasy to *realpolitik* or to human observation, from childlike dreaming to adult realism. A “knight prisoner,” as he describes himself, cannot forever sustain the illusion that his imprisonment is like Sir Tristram’s (ix.37), any more than that his knighthood is like Sir Lancelot’s. The colophons to the various sections of the work carry an increasing sense of anxiety, even of mortality: from a prayer for “good recovery,” for “good deliverance soon and hastily,” for Christ’s mercy “on all sinful souls . . . and on thy knight,” for Christ’s help to himself, and finally, in an address to all his readers,

praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyveraunce.
And whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for my soule.

And the Reformation was to sweep even that prayer into the dustbin of history.

IV

*The matters of France and Italy:
acts of recollection and invention*

The chanson de geste as a construction of memory

Jean-Pierre Martin

Translated by Jennie Feldman

What did the period (around the time of Charlemagne) that witnessed the events recounted in the medieval French epic represent for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the era that produced the works¹ attested by the texts available to us? Given that these texts claim to be true accounts of the past,² the question is one of collective memory being constructed in the *chansons de geste*, and transformed as the *chansons* evolve in response to changing circumstances.

The question can be broken down as follows:

- What structure is given to the time in which the events take place? What are its dimensions, its rhythm, and its orientation?
- What image of its past do the *chansons de geste* convey to the society in which they are composed?
- Finally, and most importantly, in what way does the epic period have something to say to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? Or rather, what are the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saying to themselves through the period in which the epic events take place?

Clearly these various issues cannot be considered in depth in the restricted scope of this chapter. So I shall first offer a description of the past as it emerges from the *chansons de geste*, indicating the bounds that contain the flow of epic memory, and then limit myself to examining how this memory is constructed, concluding with some examples of ways in which it has been put to use.

According to the work of Georges Duby in particular, the eleventh and twelfth centuries see the aristocracy setting out their lineage “vertically” across a period of a hundred and fifty years as they seek, by developing a genealogical literature, an orderly exposition of their origins, both for juridical reasons and through a sort of quest for identity, starting with the high aristocracy and descending progressively to simple knights. In this genealogical drive (some of the literary implications of which are

considered in previous essays in this volume)³ we see signs of an awareness of the significance of the past in establishing the identities that define different social groups.⁴ Around the same time, and for similar reasons, the monasteries likewise begin to put memories in order through the expedient of historiographic texts.⁵ My – not too daring – contention is that the structuring of epic memory has to be considered in relation to the development, around the same period, of this identifying historiography.⁶

At the beginning of *Garin le Loherenc*,⁷ Hervil discovers a miraculous cross in a stream near Soissons:

*Li dux s'abesse, entre ses braz la prist,
Si la dreça amont contre son piz,
Si l'en porta au mostier Saint Drosin.
Encore i est, onques puis n'en parti.
Tres bien le sevent et viellart et meschin;
Veillier i vont encor li pelerin,
Et qui bataille doit fere ne fornir.*

The duke leans down, took it in his arms,
And raised it to his breast;
He brought it to the church of St. Drosin.
There it remains, it never departed thence.
Both old and young know this very well;
Pilgrims still go there to hold vigils,
And whoever has to wage and give battle.

Here there are two stories being told: one from the epic period, recounted in the simple past as well as in the present,⁸ and the other, relating to *encor* (still remaining), roughly contemporaneous with the composition and the performance evidently implied by the text. In the first story, at the end of the reign of the emperor Charles Martel, Hervil discovers the cross and entrusts it to the Abbey of Saint Drosin; in the second, the minstrel sings the *chanson* and pilgrims come to hold a vigil in the sanctuary before going into battle.⁹ Memory plays between these two periods.

By preserving relics that allow the past to be reborn into the present, it is memory that gives the past meaning and structure. The relics mentioned in the *chansons* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries hark back to the time of the four great Carolingians: Charles Martel, Pépin the Short, Charlemagne, and Louis I (Louis the Pious). *Garin le Loherenc* begins in the time of the first and continues into the reign of the second; the *Couronnement de Louis* tells of the circumstances in which the crown is passed from the third to the fourth; Guillaume d'Orange expires in

Moniage, which rounds off the main part of his cycle, while Louis is still on the throne. The *chanson* devoted to Hervil de Metz makes him the brother-in-law of King Flore of Hungary, and hence Berthe's uncle and Charlemagne's great-uncle, and two manuscripts present him unequivocally as a contemporary of Charles Martel.¹⁰ Thus, the epic events take place in a well-defined period that is, as it were, closed off, a *Carolingian time-space*, corresponding to what Bakhtin calls "the epic national past," an "absolute past": the time of our forebears who were taller, stronger, and better than we are.¹¹ The gap between the epic period and the time of performance is thus not only temporal, but also ontological.¹²

Two examples confirm this notion of a closed-off time: *Gormont et Isembart* is based on events in the time of Louis III,¹³ *Raoul de Cambrai* on those of Louis IV's time.¹⁴ In both cases the king who takes the stage is elevated to imperial rank (*Gormont*, lines 212 and 500; *Raoul*, line 292) and is thus confused with the son of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious. The king in *Gormont*, historically the son of Louis II, the Stammerer, is presented as the son of Charlemagne, "*filz Charlun*" (lines 276 and 289);¹⁵ and when the king in *Raoul* knights his nephew, he gives him the helmet of a Saracen killed by Roland, which brings us once again to the idea of this particular time being arranged around the emblematic hero of Roncevaux.¹⁶

The primary feature of this time-space is the fact that it is deployed around that foundational event, the primordial moment that is the Battle of Roncevaux.¹⁷ By drawing out indefinitely the duration encompassing this event, but staying within the bounds of those four reigns, many *chansons* prepare the way for, or continue, the *Chanson de Roland*. *Aspremont*, *Fierabras*, and *Gui de Bourgogne* anticipate it; *Anseïs de Carthage* and *Gaydon* follow it. The Guillaume cycle links up with it through *Girart de Vienne* and *Galien le Restoré*; the Doon de Mayence cycle through *Gaufrey*, which foreshadows Ganelon, or *Renaut de Montauban*, whose hero fights against Roland. The intensity of a battle is usually gauged by comparison with that of Roncevaux. There are many examples.

Roncevaux, the primal event of the medieval epic, is also its time reference: one cannot find, either in the *Chanson de Roland* or in the other *chansons*, any date that might situate the epic event in the same time continuum as that in which its heroes are celebrated. If Charlemagne's entry into Spain can be given a date, it would have to be – according to lines 2, 197, and 2610 of the Oxford text – seven years before Roncevaux.¹⁸

Charles Martel, Pépin the Short, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious are all presented as emperors, thereby enhancing, of course, both the unity and the specificity of this time-space: the bygone span of the empire and the

Christian emperors. We may note that Charles Martel is occasionally confused with Charlemagne.¹⁹ They share a certain likeness: both offer a powerful image of an energetic emperor who often, however, acts unjustly. In *Girart de Roussillon* and *Girart de Vienne*, respectively, each confronts a rebellious vassal who might well be traceable to the same historic figure.²⁰ On the other hand, both Pépin and Louis, in the Loherain (*Loherens*) and Guillaume cycles, respectively, prove to be equally weak and unheroic, failing to reward those who serve them or to show justice to the deserving. The time period thus defined appears to be as much constructed as it is foreclosed.

In some circumstances, however, events take place during a different reign. So it is in *Floovant*, which stretches the epic period back to Clovis.²¹ But with him it is a question of the “first king of France who became Christian” [*dou premier roi de France qui crestiens devint*] (line 3), “who was the first to take up holy Christianity” [*qui premierement tint sainte christianité*] (line 36); significantly, the *chanson* has him baptized not at Rheims but at Saint-Denis (lines 32–33), and, like Charlemagne, given the appellation “king of Monloun” (line 1442) and “emperor of the Franks” (lines 1546 and 2231). The dynastic rupture with the Carolingians is omitted for the sake of a continuity symbolized by the sword Joyeuse: acquired in this *chanson* by Floovant, it will naturally come into the possession of Charlemagne before being presented to Guillaume, who will carry it until Louis’s reign at the end of the epic period.²² Annexing Clovis and his son to the Carolingians helps give meaning to this imperial time-space by making the time both primordial and also emblematic of Christian unity in the West. Indeed one could go even further back, but that would involve a different time-space, that of antiquity, of Troy and Rome, of Hector and Caesar,²³ which occupies, relative to the Carolingian period, a position similar to that of the Carolingians vis-à-vis the minstrels and their audience.²⁴ There are certainly crossing-points between this other universe and that of the *chansons*, but they involve places or people able to transcend rifts in time, like the Jew Joachim in *Girart de Vienne*, who is a contemporary of Pilate but is nonetheless able to hand over to Olivier the weapons of Aeneas.²⁵

Moving forward, in the *chansons* prior to 1250 Louis has no successors in the epic period. The only one mentioned is Hugues Capet, in *Guibert d’Andrenas*, and his appearance also signals the end of this period, since he is presented as a rebel and a usurper, albeit one whose story is not told;²⁶ the series of Carolingian rulers that marked out the time-space of the epic does not extend beyond Louis. It is only from the second half of the thirteenth century, when the *chanson de geste* evolves toward the romance

of adventure, that events after the time of Louis can be recounted. This is the case with *Hugues Capet*, whose hero sees himself as in some way belonging to the epic period, through the encounter with a survivor of Roncevaux who has become a hermit, and who proffers his garments as a gift. Only then can Hugues Capet assume a kingly dignity, placing himself symbolically within the "time of Charlemagne" [*tamps Charlemaingne*] from which he had previously been excluded.²⁷ Or again with the continuation of *Ogier*, written around 1310, in the reign of Philip the Fair: escaping from the Carolingian world, the Dane finds himself in the reign of a King Philip, after spending two hundred years in Avalon with Morgan and Arthur.²⁸ But this sojourn in fact underscores the heterogeneity of the epic period and that which followed, and the impossibility of crossing directly from one to the other. Although the King Philip in question cannot be clearly identified, he no doubt belongs to the Capetian lineage and has nothing in common with the preceding dynasty. Moreover, the hero thenceforth appears as a veritable giant, so small has mankind become in the interval between the old times and the new. Accordingly, far from integrating the epic period into the historical continuum, the appearance of Louis's successors only serves to confirm its essential otherness.²⁹ This situation is symmetrical, all things being equal, to the position of antiquity relative to the Carolingian period.

One can perhaps discern, in these late *chansons*, an inflection towards the romance, and the term *romanesque* has been used for older texts where the hero's personal adventures and the theme of love occupy a vital place.³⁰ Ogier's sojourn with Arthur and Morgan, coming after Rainouart's in the *Bataille Loquifer*, invites a fortiori such comparison. We should be careful, however, not to be misled by names. The Avalon of Rainouart and Ogier is not the place of Arthurian adventure. Rather, it is a non-place. Rainouart is taken there in his sleep, and two weeks later finds himself still sleeping on the shore whence he had been borne off. The fairies had carried him away; the sirens bring him back – immersed in the wonders of a warriors' paradise, where a fortnight is contained in the space of a dream. On the other hand, the few days Ogier spends there last two hundred years. These incursions into the yonder world of Arthurian legend lead us into the realm of the folktale rather than that of the romance.³¹ More broadly speaking, the *romanesque* element of the *chansons de geste* is closer to that of Greek,³² rather than Arthurian, romance. For the heroes of the *chansons*, the quest is for status, not – as it is for a Lancelot, a Perceval, or a Guinglain (the Fair Unknown) – for identity. To put it schematically, for the Arthurian figures, love in general, whether legitimate or adulterous,

recurrently tends to be strangely sterile, and when not, it often comes of machinations (Galahad), or else leads to catastrophe (Mordred). By contrast, epic love is very largely legitimate and fruitful.³³ Though contained within the – albeit extensible – limits of the Carolingian period, for epic heroes love is clearly directed towards a future that is both dynastic and social, whereas for heroes of the romance, love often seems centered on a self-quest, and, symbolically, appears destined to be repeated time and again in the return to Arthur's court and in the recording of narrative events in the book of Blaise. Some of the intricacies of love in French Arthurian romance are discussed earlier in this volume.³⁴

In the *chansons de geste* the proliferation of adventures does not necessarily lead to Camelot or Carduel. This we see in the example of *Beuve de Hantone*, a biographical *chanson* if ever there was, and based largely on the adventures of a couple, but a couple that knows marriage, adversity, and separation, and amidst its tribulations brings into the world a new heroic generation. The earliest version, also the shortest, is without doubt the Anglo-Norman, which precisely locates events in the time of Edgar, king of England, a time-frame that is preserved in the Middle English romance. But as the story crosses over to the Continent, where its dimensions grow and the adventures likewise multiply, it is naturally the general era of Charlemagne (in fact, Charles Martel) that sets the scene for these heroes of the “romanesque” epic who, as such, are not heroes of romance.³⁵

Thus the epic period appears as the start of something entirely new, the myth of the Christian origin of a feudal West united under the rule of its emperors.³⁶ This is one of the ways in which the *chansons de geste* resemble the genealogical literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These latter texts are actually based on the recollections of descendants, but it seems that the use of this expedient made it impossible to go back more than about a hundred years, two centuries at most in the higher aristocracy. Beyond that, it was necessary to invent founding ancestors, and thus reconstruct memory through the expedient of myth.³⁷ The past transmitted by the *chansons de geste* likewise goes back beyond all actual memory, direct or semi-direct, at least in the socio-cultural circle that constituted their principal audience, the nobility of the seigneurial courts.³⁸ This past, too, is a founding era, but now it is the founding of the collectivity, rather than of lineage, though the imaginative process is virtually the same. If the result takes the form of a *chanson*, it is because memory is no longer intended only to define certain rights and to hand down property by identifying those entitled to lay claim to them. With the *chanson* the

collectivity celebrates its unity, its territory, and the values that underpin it, which give it an identity and which justify its very existence.³⁹

Founding eras are characterized by, among other traits, two features also found in the *chansons de geste*. The first has to do with relics from that era which, spanning the rift that separates the time of their origins from the time when they are revered, guarantees the veracity of the mythic narrative.⁴⁰ The black cross discovered by Hervil, which is still hallowed by pilgrims in the minstrel's day, is a perfect example. Such relics figure abundantly in the *chansons*. Another instance is the body of Vivien in *Aymeri de Narbonne* (redaction R, lines 4532–33):

*En Aleschans Guillaumes l'enfoï;
Encore i gist il ores.*

William buried him in Aliscamps;
There he lies to this day.

The relic is one of the principal points of contact that make it possible to cross from one time-space to another, as do the weapons of the heroes of antiquity, with which the *chanson* heroes are equipped.

The second feature also relates to traces from the past: in many cultures, ruins are reputed to be the work of giants who once peopled the earth.⁴¹ Giants are very much in evidence in the *chansons de geste*. They are to be found notably among the Saracens, who are often taken to be the builders of ancient fortresses, as in *Gerbert de Mez*:⁴²

*Une grant croute, que firent Sarrasin,
Ot el chastel, qui fu du tanz antif.*

A vast vault made by Saracens
Was in the castle, which dated from antiquity.

Adémar de Chabannes relates that twenty magic-working giants from Cordoba had been captured as they attacked Narbonne, and had then been sent as a present to Saint-Martial in Limoges.⁴³ But even the Christians Guillaume and Rainouart, though never explicitly called “giants,” are endowed with an unusual stature and strength. The most explicit example, however, is the one mentioned above, in which Ogier is astonished to discover the diminutive size of King Philip's contemporaries. “A history of the degeneration of the human body, of the aging and waning of the earth's productivity,” writes Henri Bresc, “incorporates the period of the giants into the ensemble of the Creation and Redemption histories.”⁴⁴

The Saracen giants are doubly mythic figures. Not only do they belong to that ancient race that peopled the earth in the time of Charlemagne, but in this same period they are also the perpetuators of ancient paganism, keeping alive its memory and continuing its demoniac cults.⁴⁵ A good illustration is the *Couronnement de Louis*,⁴⁶ in which the Saracens are represented, on the one hand, by the giant Corsolt, who measures “two metres from shoulders to belt” [*une grant toise d’espaules au braier*] (line 512), and, on the other, by King Galafre, who claims possession of Rome (lines 466–69):

*Ci sui venuz en mon droit heritage
Que estora mes ancestres, mes aves
Et Romulus et Julius Cesaire
Qui fist ces murs et ces tors et cez barres.*

I came here for my rightful inheritance
Established by my ancestor, my forefather,
And by Romulus and Julius Caesar,
Who made these walls, these towers, and these barriers.

The construction of this mythic memory is a means of integrating and explaining a disconcerting reality – the occupation by a non-Christian people of areas once loyal to the evangelical faith – by assimilating it into the resurgent menace of ancient paganism. Carolingian time-space thus finds itself confronting figures and forces from another world, surviving elements of an ancient time that the conversion of the West should have brought to an end, just as Baligant, “the elder of antiquity” [*le viel d’antiquitet*], outlived Virgil and Homer.⁴⁷

The example of Galafre also shows that collective mythic memory, for which the *chanson de geste* is the repository, can also draw on the individual memory of different characters, and thus on what they say. This is clearly seen in the evocation of ancestors, who add historical depth to the epic period. In the case of the Saracens, it could be a question, as here, of justifying territorial claims, in a way that is strikingly reminiscent of one of the functions of genealogical texts: belonging to a dynasty justifies a bid to retain ancestral property. In the *Narbonnais*,⁴⁸ when the *amirant* places Narbonne under siege, he is laying claim to it as an inheritance, and he proceeds with a lengthy account of how the town was founded by his ancestor Gaudin, how the latter was murdered and his death avenged by Julius Caesar [*Gile Cesaire*], concluding with the conflict that pitted the latter against Pompey [*Popee*]. Thus the Saracen king uses the – considerably revised – history of the Roman civil war to argue his case,

without any mention of the fact that at issue is the recapture of a town recently lost to the Christians (lines 2696–3722).

Preoccupation with the past is not exclusive to the pagans. Guillaume d'Orange regularly asks to hear songs about the lofty deeds of ancient kings and of his own forebears:⁴⁹

*De Clodoveu, le premier empereur
Que en duce France creeit en Deu, nostre seignur,
E de sun fiz, Flovent le poigneür,
Ki laissad de dulce France l'onur,
E de tuz les reis qui furent de valur
Tresque a Pepin, le petit poigneür,
E de Charlemaigne e de Rollant, sun nevou,
De Girart de Viane e de Oliver, qui fu tant prouz:
Cil furent si parent e ses ancesur.*

Of Clovis, the first emperor
In sweet France who believed in God our Lord,
And of his son, Flovent the swordsman,
Who went far from the kingdom of sweet France,
And of all the valiant kings
As far as Pepin, the small swordsman,
And of Charlemagne and his nephew Roland,
Of Girart of Vienne and Olivier who was so worthy:
These were his kinsfolk and ancestors.

It will be noted that the reach of such retrospective contemplation coincides exactly with the time-space to which each belongs: the pagan going back to Julius Caesar, and the Christian to Clovis.

Recollections by individuals show another trait typical of the epic genre: the retrospective accounts of an event or series of events. In addition to forming a regular part of discursive strategy, as when Roland recalls the murder of Basan and Basile in order to persuade Charlemagne to reject Marsile's proposals,⁵⁰ these accounts are often given by one of the major protagonists of the *chanson*, and they are intended to recall deeds that are known to all. This clearly follows from the literary status of the epic: it celebrates a communal past, and by the same token, the events it relates belong to a culture that is shared by the minstrel, the audience, and – through a kind of transitivity – by the characters themselves.⁵¹ In this way, retrospective accounts help give coherence to the epic time-space. In Arthurian romance, by contrast, they are usually spoken by incidental, or at least secondary, characters, and they inform the protagonists of deeds of yore unknown to them, helping them to understand the situations they

have come to be in and the adventures that befall them: thus Maboagrain explains to Erec the origins of "*Joie de la Cour*":⁵²

*Or oëz qui m'a retenu
an cest vergier si longuemant.*

Hear now what kept me
For so long in this orchard.

It is thus a question of going back to the origins of the adventure. It is the poetics of a quest pursued, in which the hero goes from one discovery to another, in a world that he learns to decipher, and that the reader discovers with him. In the romance of antiquity, on the other hand, retrospective accounts have a third purpose: since their function is to transmit knowledge, they help to elucidate or round out this knowledge, as when the narrator of *Eneas* takes it upon himself to relate the judgment of Paris or the loves of Mars and Venus⁵³ – information that Virgil's readers already knew well. And even when the epic hero takes up the retrospective account given by his Latin model, he often chooses to adopt it as his own, thus clearly assuming the role of instructor vis-à-vis his audience.⁵⁴

The preceding examples from twelfth-century romance show *a contrario* the degree to which a sense of communal memory is crucial for the medieval epic, and how much it contributes both to the unity of the world being represented and to its signification.

However, by serving as a means of establishing identity in the here-and-now of the minstrel and his performance, memory reconstructed by the *chanson de geste* is also put to use in varying ways during this same time.

The first is scholarly exploitation by medieval historiography. Bernard Guenée has shown very clearly the clerics' ambivalent attitude in this regard – at once wary of popular traditions and yet compelled to rely on them to fill the gaps in their documentation.⁵⁵ One can even speak of a rather perverse attraction, on the part of these peaceable men of the quill, to tales of wounds and bruises, which they roundly declare to be untrustworthy. This was the case with the *Pseudo-Turpin* and the *Chronique de Waulsort*. These two examples effectively show how epic legend is absorbed into scholarly history. It was not a matter of taking the legends literally and simply translating them into Latin, but rather of making them take on the aspect appropriate to the form in question. Firstly, they had to be given the mark of historical discourse. Although medieval history has few dates,⁵⁶ dating an event inscribes it in a linear continuum that forms an unbroken link with the moment of writing, and thus eliminates the

boundary that epic has cast around it.⁵⁷ The *Pseudo-Turpin* gives the date of Charlemagne's death and – somewhat fancifully – of the battle of Roncevaux. Moreover it appropriates the most reliable marker of authenticity by claiming to be written by a first-hand witness. To do this doubtless requires a certain distortion of the story – but in any case it is known to be unreliable, so that altering it poses no problem. Besides, there were several legends surrounding Charlemagne, Roland, and the expedition to Spain; thus the *Pseudo-Turpin* can legitimately combine details from the *Chanson de Roland* with those from which *Aspremont* is derived, and make Marsile and Baligant two brothers, as happens in other traditions.⁵⁸ Finally, since history is the work of clerics, it has to have an edifying aspect: Roncevaux would thenceforth be explained as a consequence of sins committed by the French warriors.⁵⁹ On a different track, the *Chronique de Waulsort* takes up the subject of *Raoul de Cambrai* and attempts to play down the scandalous aspect of the adulterous liaison between Ybert and Marsent, to remove all trace of conflict between him and his son Bernier, and to make Raoul bear full responsibility for the conflict and the havoc it wreaks.⁶⁰ But for the author, it is a question of bestowing on the founder of his abbey the luster of legend and all the exemplary features required by such a role. Here we have what characterizes historical accounts when they engage the question of origins: recourse to the founding myths that epic memory is peculiarly suited to procuring.

But the exploitation of epic memory can also involve putting it at the service of political or ideological representations. Jean Frappier gives an example from the *Couronnement de Louis*.⁶¹ He reminds us that the initial episode in which Charlemagne transfers the crown to his son, still a child, has many details in common with the chronicle of Thégan, written in the ninth century, and describing the royal transfer ceremony of 813. In particular, the advice on governance given by the emperor to his heir is obviously borrowed. Yet the differences between the epic account and that of the chronicler are as great as the similarities: in 813 Louis was aged thirty-five; he had shown no hesitation in accepting the inheritance; there had been no papal participation in the ceremony; and no great baron had sought to halt the proceedings. In 1131, however, Louis VI had lost his elder son, Philippe, and his younger son, Louis, was only ten years old. The entire policy regarding royal succession, with its aim of perpetuating the hereditary transmission of the crown, and elaborated over nearly a century and a half by the first Capetians despite the opposition of powerful vassals, risked being called into question. Hence the Capetian king's swift

decision to proceed solemnly to the crowning of the child at Rheims, in the presence of the Pope. By taking inspiration from this event for its account of the crowning of the first King Louis, son of Charlemagne, the *chanson* thus manages to give Carolingian-era legitimation to hereditary succession without regard to the heir's age. Thus recourse to epic myth in the *chanson de geste* was clearly a measure that could benefit royal politics.

Jean-Charles Herbin has recently shown how, a century later, the Loherain cycle was in turn put to use in the Franco-Flemish conflict.⁶² The two principal *chansons* of this cycle, *Garin le Loherenc* and *Gerbert de Mez*, were given several extended versions. The two continuations that have come down to us as full texts show diametrically opposed political choices: *Ansej's de Gascogne*, taking a different course from earlier *chansons*, sides with the house of Bordeaux and the Flemish lineage against that of Lorraine and the king of France; the *Vengeance Fromondin*, however, takes the part of Lorraine against the lineages of Bordeaux and Flanders. Both *chansons* allude to the conflicts in the thirteenth century between Flanders, allied to the king of England, and Philippe-Auguste, and (at a later stage) Saint Louis (Louis IX), notably at the battle of Bouvines and in Louis's campaign in Poitou in 1242. Probably written by one of the entourage of the counts of Flanders, *Ansej's* endeavors to take literary revenge for Flemish defeats, and sees the king of France as responsible for the destruction of the knighthood. It may be noted that in drawing up the character of Bauche li cors, the author presents him as a Flemish count who is a paragon of piety and saintliness, and who may well have been conceived as a counterpart to the figure of – the as yet uncanonized – Louis IX. The *Vengeance Fromondin*, on the other hand, comes across as an engine of war turned against the feudalists in the north, whose property it delights in destroying; in recounting the victory of the French king over a somewhat ill-used Flemish count, it is distinctly reminiscent of Bouvines. In addition, it tells of an expedition by the forces of Lorraine to Saintes – a clear allusion, it seems, to the campaign of 1242. Quite apart from the author's involvement in favor of the king's party, this contrary conclusion to the Loherain cycle might well be a polemical response to the earlier ending. In that case, what we have is plainly the expedient manipulation of the epic world to gain advantage in disputes of that time. Whether or not, as Mary Carruthers argues, medieval scholarship is characterized by a total indifference to the past character of the past,⁶³ the authors of the *chansons de geste* are very adept at exploiting its mythic dimensions when current issues are at stake.

In a more general way, and depending less directly on immediate circumstances, the Carolingian myth helps to illustrate different aspects

of the ideology of feudal society. Its role in relaying the call to join the Crusades has been amply studied and discussed, but another major aspect of the issue is the way in which the *chanson de geste* represents the king's function regarding the entire realm. I have in mind, in particular, the important work of Dominique Boutet, which cannot conceivably be summarized here.⁶⁴ I will merely refer to the fact that it sees in the representations of royalty in the *chansons de geste* the expression of two concurrent and contradictory ideas of what a king should be: God's representative on earth, or the first among feudal lords – ideas that come into confrontation precisely in the period when the Capetian monarchy is being consolidated. The contradiction between them grows ever more acute as people become increasingly aware of the gulf between the earthly kingdom and the kingdom of God, and therefore aware, too, of the impossibility of the task facing the king, who was to lead his subjects towards an ideal order. This questioning of political matters is not exclusive to the *chanson de geste*; it is also found in Arthurian romance of the same period. In this way, both the romance and the epic genres use their mythic worlds to interrogate the society in which they develop. Each does this in accordance with the nature of the time-space in which its story unfolds. Arthurian romance does not feature the kind of primordial activity that distinguishes the *chanson de geste*, and it is not linked in the same way to a collectivity whose history it relates. This accounts, in part, for the unpredictable and individual character of Arthurian adventure. It also allows the king's role to appear more utopian and less concerned with material – that is, political – contingencies. In the *chanson de geste*, by contrast, such concerns are ever-present, bringing secular considerations increasingly to the fore, especially with an emperor whose image is always more dominant than the Pope's. From this perspective, Arthurian myth seems to be less subject to the realities of the world than Carolingian myth, though Arthurian literature has its own ways of evoking contemporary conditions and social agendas. Its link with sacred history in the person of Joseph of Arimathea is one factor that prevents its narrative from slipping entirely into a fictive time; but it can also take on an allegorical dimension, notably in the *Queste del Saint Graal*, which also distances it, though in a different way, from historical time.⁶⁵ However cut off it may be from the present, the epic period endures as a past era, a time of absolute beginnings; as such it has to take account of the present and, whatever else, is always at hand for engaging current issues.

The *chanson de geste* acquired its epic dimension by transposing a period of history to a mythic time-space that is closed off and primordial – “auroral,”

to borrow the term used by Mircea Eliade.⁶⁶ This period assumes several of the features of mythical times: a distinctive otherness in relation to the present, and a certain circularity combined with exceptional elasticity, as well as a notable compactness. But the Carolingian period is also grafted onto linear historical time, and allows for the development within it of succeeding generations. Although closed in on itself, it is a world that nonetheless absorbs changes taking place outside it. It is upon this somewhat dialectical rapport between actual historical time and the time of a mythic past that the epic can construct itself as memory.

This remains fundamentally unchanged amid the revisions and developments of the fourteenth century and the subsequent prose versions and adaptations of the Bibliothèque Bleue. Nonetheless, the epic's increasing openness to other historical factors such as the Crusades or lives of the saints, as well as to Arthurian magic, promotes an evolution towards fiction, which becomes more marked when the subject matter of the epic is destined for an audience with which it now has virtually no historical connection, or – to put it another way – for which it can no longer serve as memory, other than quite artificially: I am thinking especially of the Franco-Italian *chansons*. Thus there is nothing to impede a complete fusion of the different narrative worlds, henceforth largely detached from the conception of historical time in the *chansons de geste*. When he becomes a knight-errant, Roland, like Yvain, will come to know love and madness – a development with provocative implications for imaginative and critical history (see [Chapters 10, 12, and 13](#)).⁶⁷ The road that begins with Boiardo and Ariosto will lead on to *Don Quixote*. After four centuries, Rainouart's Arthurian dream will find its likeness in what we call the novel.

*Ruggiero's story: the making of a dynastic hero**Riccardo Brusagli*

Romance doesn't translate into contemporary Italian. *Romanzo* in Italian today means *novel*, and there is no way to convey in a single Italian term the configuration of senses now often associated with the English term *romance*: a mix of idealism, moral aggrandizement, dreamy detachment from everyday realism, and devotion to "romantic" love. It was not always so. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and well through the Age of Reason, *romanzo* in Italian meant a narration (in verse or in prose) characterized by the presence of idealized sentiments and characters, often taking place in foreign and exotic settings, and regularly displaying a conspicuous amount of escapism. The term retained this meaning until, ironically enough, the beginning of the Romantic era, when the word *romanzo* lost this early resonance and started to be associated with a more realistic, mimetic mode of narration.

For a range of writers in the Italian Renaissance, this theatrical aspect of the Italian *romanzo* identifies it and distinguishes it from a competing kind of heroic narrative, the classical *epos*. The question of clarifying the definition, the origin, the poetic legitimacy, the moral value, the "form" of the *romanzo* (and of its competitor, the epic poem) lies not only at the center of the theoretical debates of the Italian Renaissance – a topic examined later in this volume – but also at the center of its poetic creativity. It may be that we could survive without the critical treatments of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the sixteenth century, or without the skirmishes on *epos* and *romanzo* of Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio, Giovambattista Pigna, Antonio Minturno, and others. It would be a little more difficult to imagine Italian literature deprived of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

In recent decades questions about the role of the *romanzo* have returned to the center of Italian literary scholarship. Such scholarship has increasingly explored the *romanzo* not only in terms of its own narratological and intellectual designs, but also in the context of romantic and novelistic

modes in European literature at large. By the same token, it has also increasingly situated the *romanzo* in the restless social conditions of its own times, treating it as a way of participating in the very history it seems to escape. The discussion that follows examines one of the most imaginative cases of that participation.

On April 14, 1471, in a solemn ceremony in Rome, Pope Paul II invested Borso d'Este, current lord of the city, with the title of Duke of Ferrara. Up until that moment Borso, like his predecessors, had been a marquis: a mere *marchese di Ferrara*. Now, upon receiving from the hands of the Pope the golden rose and the crown, he became a *duca*, the new *dux Ferrariae*.

The occasion was not just a matter of pomp and circumstance. For us today, promotion from marquis to duke might seem a trivial matter of petty presumption. In the fifteenth century it was not. Promotion of this kind meant Ferrara's admission into the ranks of first-rate powers, not only of Italy, but of Europe at large. The marriages of future dukes of Ferrara in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries demonstrate quite effectively this leap in status for the Este lords. Ercole, Borso's half-brother and his successor to the ducal throne, will marry Eleanor of Aragon, daughter of the King of Naples. Alfonso, his son, will marry the beautiful and fateful daughter of Pope Alexander VI, Lucrezia Borgia. Ercole II, the third Duke of Ferrara, will bring to the altar Renée of France, the daughter of the French king Louis XII.

A new title means new political status, along with new cultural ambitions. From 1471 onwards, Ferrara feels like a real monarchy, and starts to produce a cultural apparatus worthy of its newly elevated dignity.

Borso had come to Rome from Ferrara, in April 1471, accompanied by a splendid *cavalcata* of the most renowned gentlemen of his court. Among them were the two preeminent figures of his literary circle: Tito Vespasiano Strozzi and Matteo Maria Boiardo.¹ They were uncle and nephew: the first, already famous for the amorous verses of his *Erotica*; the second, the keen hope of a new generation of Ferrarese humanists. Something new, though, was stirring in their literary activity. Tito had already been working, probably for more than a decade, on his *Borsias*: an epic poem, in Latin hexameters, devoted to the hyperbolic aggrandizement of the life and deeds of the divine Borso himself.² Young Boiardo had already joined his uncle's profession of panegyrist to the Este house and had already produced his *Carmina de laudibus Estensium*, quite consonant with Tito's poetic mode in terms of courtly magnification of the Ferrarese ruler and his family.³ *Borsias* is not the title of a mere panegyric. It is a

Virgilian title, something that promises an epic story, a new *Aeneid*, the transformation of the Marquis, now Duke, of Ferrara, into a cogent narrative character. But Tito's muse was not a narrative one. His poem, more or less completed in 1505, never quite rises above elegant but tedious reports of Borso's good deeds, along with descriptions of various official occasions and accounts of assorted mythological creatures that convey portentous messages, epiphanies about the great future of the Este dynasty.⁴ Something of interest did happen, though, in the years 1493–94, according to Walther Ludwig, the modern editor of Tito's poem (almost all of which remained unknown until its recent edition in 1977). Probably during the winter, Tito extracted from the larger work a small section of a few pages, which he arranged to be splendidly copied and illuminated in a small parchment volume that he offered as a special gift to Ercole himself.⁵ Those pages contained an episode from canto VI of the *Borsias*, in which a "new" hero suddenly emerged: an ancient hero, in fact the ancestor of the Este house – Ruggiero, or more precisely, *Ruggerius*. But by the winter of 1493–94, Ruggiero was hardly a new entry in the celebration of the Este family; Tito's nephew, Boiardo, had already largely outwritten his uncle. In 1482–83 he had published the first edition, in two books, of his *Orlando Innamorato*. (A third book was left unfinished when he died in 1494; the poem at large was published posthumously by his family in 1495.)⁶ The similarity between Tito's Latin Rugerius and Boiardo's vernacular Ruggiero has raised many questions, few of which can be answered satisfactorily, at least in the present state of the art. Whose invention is this previously unknown Ruggiero? Tito's or Boiardo's?⁷ Are we sure that he was indeed previously unknown?⁸ Or has the loss of so much late fifteenth-century chivalric material forced us, more or less, to guess? In any case, why did the Este suddenly need an ancestor, or at least a new one?

The invention of Ruggiero, that is, of a new ancestor of the Este family, has long been the object of passionate inquiry.⁹ Traditionally, the necessity for Ruggiero has been identified with the need to avoid another ancestry, disseminated and promoted, we used to think, by the enemies and detractors of the Este house. It was said that the Este descended from Gano di Maganza (Ganelon), the traitor of Orlando at Roncisvalle. This genealogy goes back to the *Liber de generatione aliquorum civium urbis Paduae*, by Giovanni di Nono (c. 1325). The traditional explanation was repeated frequently until very recently, when Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti rightly observed, first, that the descent from Gano di Maganza was not just disseminated in milieux hostile to the Este, but was also very popular in the court of Ferrara itself and in the circle of its own courtly writers and

intellectuals, and second, that while Gano was a horrible traitor (Dante puts him in *Inferno*), his house was still one of the most prestigious, at least in the French epic tradition.¹⁰ Thus the Este did not necessarily need a new ancestor to replace a previous, unrepresentable one. Ruggiero was not the rectification of a disgrace; he was rather a daring, very ambitious step up. Ruggiero was none other than a descendant of Hector of Troy; more precisely, of Hector's son Astyanax, who was not slain during the fatal last night of the city (as is recounted in the well-known classical sources, from Euripides to Virgil to Seneca), but who had been miraculously saved and had then come west, to Europe, where he had engendered quite an abundant lineage, to the Este, on one side, and to the Carolingian kings, on the other.¹¹

This claim to Trojan ancestry by the lords of Ferrara has in my view been generally undervalued. It is true that from the seventh century onwards, and especially from the twelfth century, everybody in Europe wanted to be descended from Troy. Germans, Britons, Danes, Poles, Austrians, even Turks; Merovingian as well as Carolingian kings; dukes of the Basse Lorraine, of Bourgogne, of Namour, of Boulogne: all were children of Troy, through the fabrication of a number of very convenient Trojan survivors. The British kings? From Brutus, whose father, Silvius, was the son of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas. The Scots? From Albanactus, the son of Brutus. The French? From Francus, often identified with Astyanax himself: as Ronsard puts it at the beginning of his sixteenth-century *Franciade*: “*Muse . . . guide ma langue et me chante la race / des roys François yssus de Francion / enfant d’Hector Troyen de nation.*”¹²

Such claims belong to what Roberto Bizzocchi has brilliantly described as “incredible genealogies” [*genealogie incredibili*]:¹³ a frantic, and, more often than not, comic frenzy that swept across Europe well beyond the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, up to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. (It is Reason, in fact, through the deliciously poisonous prose of Voltaire, that will destroy this carnival of extravagant ambitions, in Voltaire's memorable rebuttal of Joseph de Guignes's *Mémoire dans le quel on prouve, que les Chinois sont une colonie égyptienne*.¹⁴) The genealogical impulse informs the writing of romance long before and long after the time of Tito Strozzi and Boiardo (see [Chapters 5, 6, and 14](#) of this volume). But this does not mean that the invention of Ruggiero by Tito and Boiardo is of negligible importance. In this case, even the valuable commentary of Tissoni Benvenuti seems a little too lukewarm:

With regard to the dynastic aspect of the *Innamorato*, Ruggiero's self-introduction is very important: he claims Trojan origins, more illustrious

(by the direct descent from the surviving Astyanax) than those of the Roman emperors, who descended from Aeneas, or those of the kings of France, who traced their origins to Troy through Hector's younger brother Francus. The Este's links with France and chivalry, much in vogue in Borso's time, are shifted into the background . . . in homage to Ercole's wishes and according to the new classicizing fashion.¹⁵

The similarity to Virgil's treatment of Aeneas as the ancestor of the Romans is striking, but it should be remembered that the frenzy for Trojan ancestry had been triggered, in the Middle Ages, more by the apocryphal writings of Dares and Dictys than by the *Aeneid*, and that the Trojan "infection" was far more complex and diverse than a simple comparison with Virgil's *Aeneid* could suggest. Briefly, it seems to me that with the invention of Ruggiero and with the Este claim of a *genealogia incredibile* of Trojan distinction, Ferrara wanted to enter not simply into competition with Virgil but into a general European contest that involved almost all the ruling houses of early modern monarchies in the West. That is why the invention of Ruggiero coincides, more or less, with Borso's investiture with the new ducal title: with the moment, in other words, when Ferrara enters a new, much nobler category of lordship. When you are promoted from marquis to duke, you need, as it were, an ancestor of Trojan blood. . .

But what is particularly striking in Ferrara is the larger cultural design of its Trojan claim and the literary creations that spring from it. What the *Borsias* just touches on, and what *Orlando Innamorato* fully develops, is what is sometimes called a *master fiction* or (in the idiom of Foucault) a *récit* or *discours du pouvoir*.¹⁶ The *Borsias's discours du pouvoir* is, as far as Ruggiero is concerned, quite elementary. Tito Strozzi presents the young hero as the pupil of an old magician and wise man, Atalante, who has raised him on Mount Carena, bringing to perfection his spiritual, cultural, and physical qualities while at the same time segregating him from the world for as long as possible. Atalante evokes some of the features of both Chiron (the centaur who raised Achilles to a level of unsurpassed physical prowess and moral courage) and Thetis (the mother of Achilles concerned about the dark destiny of her son). But the destiny that concerns Atalante is that Ruggiero will eventually convert from pagan belief to Christianity: "*cerno . . . alios emergere ritus*" [I can see . . . new religious rites taking over] (VI.391–92). Half-Chiron, half-Thetis, the devoted Atalante finally frees Ruggiero from his tutelage with a moving *adieu* full of dignity and love: "*Vade tui memor Atlantis, te numina postquam / eripiunt mihi, care puer! . . .*" [And now go, and remember Atlas, since the gods take you away from me, dear boy. . .] (VI.342–43). It is a good proem for a very good

story, which in Tito's poem, as I have noted, never substantially develops. That is why it seems to me quite unlikely that the *Borsias* inherited this character from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. The sheer simplicity of Tito's Ruggiero, compared to his complexity in Boiardo's poem, seems to belong to a still tentative, inchoate phase of the character's existence.

In any case, it is with Boiardo that the invention of Ruggiero truly advances the master fiction of a genealogical claim capable of challenging the formidable propagandistic machines of the early modern European monarchies. To my knowledge, insufficient consideration has been given to the impressive resemblance of Boiardo's dynastic invention to the most complex and powerful *discours du pouvoir* of modern Europe: the British one, or, more precisely, the Elizabethan one. Naturally, I am not suggesting the possibility that Boiardo's work directly influenced the Tudor narrative of legitimization. Yet the comparison can help to clarify, in retrospect, the true character of Boiardo's cultural design.

As a range of scholarship – from Frances Yates on¹⁷ – has abundantly demonstrated, the master fiction of the sixteenth-century British monarchy (a “history” about which some contemporaries expressed reservations) embraces a wide variety of writings and propagandistic materials: from historical or pseudohistorical accounts such as *The Light of Britayne* by Henry Lyte (1588) or the *Chronicles* of Holinshed, the main historical source of Shakespeare; to serious polemical rebukes of skeptics and non-believers, such as Richard Harvey's *Philadelphus* (1593) or John Leland's *Assertio inclytissimi Arturi Regis Britanniae* (1544); to poetic works such as Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Yet the main features of this *discours du pouvoir* go back essentially to the *Historia regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth,¹⁸ a work with a far-reaching afterlife in later vernacular writing (see [Chapters 4–5](#) of this volume). It is Geoffrey who popularizes the view that British kings descend from Brutus; who makes a close connection between the figure of Arthur and Trojan blood; who traces the genealogy of British rulers down to Cadwallader; and who suspends the story of “Major Britannia,” leaving it intriguingly unfinished. Cadwallader, whose departure from a Britain ravaged by civil war and plague is eventually exploited by the Saxons, is about to attempt a reconquest of the kingdom, when a *vox angelica* comes down from heaven and stops the enterprise: God does not want the Britons to reign over Britain until the time that Merlin had prophesized to Arthur. For many later writers the prospect of such a time involved the return of Arthur himself.

This genealogical plot conspicuously fits the dynastic anxiety of the Tudors. Not only did the association with Trojan blood give the dynasty

an unsurpassed splendor; not only could that association connect the present rulers of England to its native, more legitimate inhabitants; it could also connect Arthur, the prospective vindicator of British honor, with the monarchs of the period – with Henry VIII and, more elaborately, with Elizabeth, the providential “Faerie Queene” (see [Chapter 14](#) in this study). As Thomas Hughes expressed it in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a play presented before Queen Elizabeth herself in 1588:

That virtuous Virgo born for Britain's bliss:
That peerless branch of Brute: that sweet remain
Of Priam's state: that hope of springing Troy:
...
Let her reduce the golden age again,
Religion, ease and wealth of former world.
Yea let that Virgo come and Saturns reign . . .¹⁹

The passage catches beautifully the British master fiction in action: that is, the synergy of the Trojan descent from Brutus, the British dynasty, and the new golden age brought about by the new ruler. What is less obvious, but easily inferred, is that this new golden age is not just one of the many sought by Renaissance courtly literature. It is something ideologically denser; it is the fulfillment of Merlin's prophecy; it is the age of Saturn, to be sure, in classical terms, but it is also the return of the age of Arthur.

This vision, an aspect of Elizabethan culture, is impressively anticipated by Boiardo in his *Orlando Innamorato*. In this poem, the author introduces Rug[g]iero, boasting of his Trojan blood, to an already adoring Bradamante:

Rugiero started from the first
Offense against the Greeks, the cause
That led two kingdoms into war –
Priam's and Agamemnon's. He
Told her about the wooden horse . . .
(III.v.18)²⁰

Ruggiero proudly recites at length (twenty-nine octaves) his genealogy, from the initial *coup de théâtre* – the survival of Astyanax – to the division of his bloodline between Costante, the ancestor of the *reali di Francia* (the royal house of France), and Clodovaco, the ancestor of Ruggiero's own family branch. With the descendants of one member of the family, Bovo of Antona (Hampton/Southampton), that branch is further divided into two settings: an English one and an Italian one, the latter eventually providing the context for the romantic and tragic history of Ruggiero's

unfortunate parents, Riccieri and Galaciella, and his education by Atalante. Ruggiero's final statement, shaped into a particularly sonorous hendecasyllabic line, reads: "*Rugier son io; da Troia è la mia gesta*" [My name's / Rugier; my people come from Troy].

The appearance of Ruggiero in Boiardo's poem coincides with the emergence in the text of a new ideological framework. At the beginning of the second book, when Ruggiero enters the story for the first time, Boiardo shifts his ideology from what had been initially proposed in the famous prologue to the first book. There, Boiardo had presented his work as the story of the shocking metamorphosis that occurred in the narrative life of Orlando, the pure and chaste hero of Carolingian epics. *Orlando innamorato*? Yes, even Orlando had to succumb to the power of love.²¹

Don't think it strange, my lords, to hear
Orlando *innamorato* sung:
It always is the proudest man
Whom Love defeats and subjugates.
No strong arm, no audacity,
No blade well-honed, no shield or mail,
No other power can avail,
For in the end Love conquers all.

(1.i.2)

The initial frame of the poem had thus been the *innamoramento*: that is, the extension of a typically Arthurian moral and psychological condition to the world of Charlemagne and his champions – the world evoked in a range of *chansons de geste*, discussed in the [previous chapter](#) of this volume.²² It was not only the "fusion" of the two most important narrative cycles of the medieval chivalric tradition; it was a true colonization, as it were, of the Carolingian world by the values and the behavior of the Arthurian world.²³ The moral superiority of Arthurian chivalry over Carolingian chivalry is openly proclaimed in a crucial passage of the poem, the famous prologue to canto xviii of the second book, where the deeds of good British knights are identified with the golden age of chivalry, followed by what seems still a noble, but not more than silver, age – the Carolingian one:

There was a time Great Britain was
Illustrious in arms and love;
Her name is celebrated still.
The glory of King Arthur stems
From when the good knights in his realm
Displayed their worth in many battles

And sought adventure with their ladies.
Her fame has lasted to our day.

Later, Charles held court in France;
His court was no equivalent,
Though it was sturdy, confident,
And had Ranaldo and the Count.
Because it closed its gates to Love
And only followed holy wars,
It could not boast the worth, the fame
The former showed, the first I named.

Love is the source of glory and
Brings worth and honor to a man . . .
(II.xviii.1-3)

But then enters Ruggiero. Ruggiero is a brand new hero: he does not belong to the old cast of Charlemagne's champions; nor is he one of the already well-known pagan heroes. He does not need to convert from the exclusive service of war to the service of love, like Orlando and the other paladins: the union of arms and love will come to him as a natural, non-traumatic, non-shocking condition. In other words, the ideological frame of the first book of the poem simply does not apply to him. With him, rather, the world will know the apex of chivalric virtue – an unsurpassable, stellar perfection:

You'll hear the prowess – glorious;
You'll hear the virtues of a rare
Heart – one whose force and beauty were
Endless: the third Rugiero, one
Whose fame and rank as paladin
Were known across all boundaries. . .
(II.i.4)

In introducing this perfect knight into his narrative, Boiardo frames his entrance with a new, different ideological scheme: the return of the lost golden age of chivalry:

During the gracious season, when
Nature makes Love's star brighter, when
She covers earth in leaves and green
And sets fair flowers on the trees,
Then every living thing, young men
And women, play; their hearts are glad.
But winter reaches us; time flows,
Delight retreats and pleasure goes.

So, in the time when virtue bloomed
 In lords and cavaliers of old,
 We lived with joy and courtesy,
 But then they fled down distant roads
 And for a long time lost the way
 And nevermore returned; but now
 The winter and sharp winds are gone,
 And virtue blossoms as before.

Singing, I call on memories,
 On acts of prowess in times past.

(II.i.1-3)

This is the prologue of the second book of *Orlando Innamorato*. The story of Orlando is not abandoned, but a new narrative unfolds and overlaps with the old one: the story of Ruggiero, and, in timely coincidence with the story of Ruggiero, the return of the knights of old. In other words, we have here elements that appear in the future Elizabethan master fiction: Trojan genealogy, the advent of a new hero, and the return of a golden age that, in Boiardo's poem as well as in Tudor legend, is associated with the return of Arthurian virtues. Boiardo offers his reader, and his lords, building blocks suitable for future British dynastic lore, but he does not complete the edifice. Nor could he do so, because this "British" (that is, Arthurian) affiliation cannot be other than spiritual: Ferrara can be a new Camelot only in a metaphorical sense. The Este can claim their Trojan blood, but not a direct national alignment with King Arthur. At the same time, if we keep in mind what Bizzocchi has keenly written about the relevance of not only blood genealogies, but also spiritual genealogies,²⁴ we might understand that Boiardo's fiction goes far beyond an ephemeral expression of vanity. Through the invention of Ruggiero, he concocts a grand dynastic scheme, founded on the characteristic interaction of the legend of Troy, the eminence of ancient Arthurian chivalry, and its return through the introduction of a new hero.

Actually, more than just an introduction. What separates the Ruggiero of Tito's *Borsias* and the Ruggiero of Boiardo's *Innamorato* is that while Tito produces just the draft of a story, Boiardo projects Ruggiero into the center of a large-scale romance, where he is destined to play a major role. Boiardo starts by changing sharply the relationship between Ruggiero and his tutor, Atalante, as well as his prospects for the future. In the *Borsias*, Atalante foresaw the role his pupil was destined to play in the destruction of the pagan world, a sorry enough prospect for the old pagan magician. In the *Innamorato*, by contrast, the resemblance of Atalante to Thetis, and of

Ruggiero to Achilles, definitively takes over: Boiardo's Atalante is desperate because he knows that the precocious perfection of his Ruggiero is tied to a destiny of early death. The steps of Ruggiero's perfection, in fact, will be steps into a grim destiny. He will meet Bradamante, a valiant female warrior, a Christian, and the sister of his foe Ranaldo da Montalbano; he will fall in love with her; he will convert to Christianity; he will marry Bradamante; and then he will be miserably betrayed and ignominiously killed by – who else? – Gano di Maganza. In the *Borsias* there were already quite recognizable allusions and borrowings from Statius' *Achilleis*;²⁵ in the *Innamorato*, the Achilleic quality of Ruggiero is fully exploited, and his beauty, his prowess, his courtesies, are enfolded within a pathetic aura of imminent defeat.

But, as we know, Boiardo only anticipated, through the prophecy of Atalante, the sad destiny of his hero. The abrupt interruption of the poem allows us to catch only a glimpse of the new character. We see how he is sought by Agramante, the pagan king well aware that his war on Christianity can be won only with the participation of Ruggiero; we follow the futile attempts of Atalante to keep his pupil away from the war; we trace his passage to France, his encounter with Bradamante, his falling in love, his total absorption in this new sentiment. Nothing more. Enough, though, to understand that Boiardo takes his claim about the "perfection" of Ruggiero very seriously. In fact, Ruggiero is not only introduced as another Achilles, that is, an unsurpassable warrior, an epic hero; he is also a perfect cavalier in the Arthurian sense, and therefore a perfect lover. The epic excellence of Ruggiero is briefly but effectively shown in the battles of the last cantos of the second book and in the third book of *Orlando Innamorato*, to the point at which only a fiction by Atalante (the sudden appearance of a fake Olivieri and a fake Ranaldo wounded and in chains) separates him from, and seems to prevent his victory over, no one less than Orlando himself.²⁶

Ruggiero is not just a hyperbolic warrior. He is an accomplished knight, whom Boiardo poignantly shows outperforming the other traditional champions exactly on the Arthurian terrain of *ventura*, of adventure. In a small but very significant episode (III.vii) a dwarf invites a group of excellent knights – Orlando, Gradasso, Brandimarte, Ruggiero himself – to a new challenge: "My lords!" he cried out. "Listen, please!"

My lords, if you love chivalry,
If you defend what's right and just,
Avenge the biggest crime on earth,
The greatest, strangest villainy!

(III.vii.37–38)

But the excellent knights are, it seems, tired of such challenges. They had just escaped another of their endless magic traps, the Fonte del Riso, and, apparently, they have had enough of such magical escapades. The dwarf takes an oath and swears that this adventure is “unenchantèd” [*che non è a questa impresa incantamento*], but the heroes seem incredulous:

“And who’ll convince me?” Asks the Count.

“I’m sorry I’ve believed so much. . .”

(III.vii.39)

And here is Ruggiero, young and fresh, reminding everybody of the unfailing duty of full-time cavaliers:

Ruggiero said, “Opinions vary:
Everyone likes his own ideas.
Some people say one ought to fear
Demoniac works and fairy spells,
But if a good knight does his duty,
He can on no account withdraw.
He must face every strange adventure,
And he must never, never fear.

“Dwarf, usher me to sea, to flames,
Or show me how to fly through air.
I’ll follow you to any task
Or place. Don’t worry, I don’t scare.”
Gradasso and the Count turned red,
A little, hearing how he spoke,
And Brandimarte told the dwarf,
“Lead on; we all will follow after.”

(III.vii.40–41)

It is very significant that the code of Arthurian *ventura* is so impeccably recited by this new personage in Boiardo’s poem: it is quite clear that we are witnessing a changing of the guard. Not only on the battlefield, but also in the characteristic realm of Arthurian *ventura*, now it is Ruggiero who is supposed to receive the torch of the old virtues and make them even more resplendent.

The same can be said for his service in love. Here, too, it is a small episode that is the most revealing. After meeting Bradamante, after falling in love with her, after proudly reciting his noble origins, Ruggiero is separated from his beloved by the vicissitudes of war. They do not even have time mutually to acknowledge their love: night falls, and they search for each other in vain. In fact, the searcher is Ruggiero:

The sun is hidden in the west
 Before that difficult duel ends
 And the young man, in love, looks round
 For Bradamant. Rugier's distressed
 And can't calm his anxiety,
 For dark night has arrived already,
 And nowhere does he see the lady
 He cherishes. He calls, he searches.

(III.vi.33)

He is so deeply immersed in his amorous thoughts that when he encounters a couple of paladins in the dark, he does not even hear their greetings. Only with their sarcastic remarks ("A villain he must surely be . . .") does he wake up from his *reverie*, apologize for his involuntary rudeness, and proclaim his total devotion to Love:

You're right. I'm to blame.
 Love holds a bridle on my heart,
 And Love confounds my faculties.
 I'm not the man I used to be.

(III.vi.35)

A perfect warrior, a perfect knight, a perfect lover. I emphasize these significant glimpses in Boiardo's narrative because, as we know, Ruggiero's story did not end here. It did not end, I mean, with the sudden interruption of Boiardo's poem. The opportunity was too inviting; the serializing practices of sixteenth-century chivalric poetry – practices with provocative implications for the treatment of history²⁷ – could not miss the opportunity to continue the interrupted *Orlando Innamorato* with various sequels: a fourth, and then a fifth, and then a sixth book of the poem, provided by various authors; and then new poems devoted to the story of Ruggiero's posthumous son, Ruggerino; and finally the *Orlando Furioso* of Ludovico Ariosto.²⁸

Ariosto radically changes the story of Ruggiero and gives a totally new twist to the making of the Este dynastic hero. The authors of the other sequels had dutifully followed Boiardo's first episode: their Ruggieros immediately marry Bradamante (in general, after an extremely hurried baptism); they briefly enjoy marital happiness; and they rapidly fall into the perverse hands of Gano di Maganza. Not Ariosto. *Orlando Furioso*, first of all, decisively defers the sad conclusion of Ruggiero's story. To be sure, the tragic foreknowledge of Atlante (Atalante) lingers in the background of the narrative,²⁹ but Ariosto's poem ends with the magnificent celebration of the marriage between Bradamante and Ruggiero. It might be a

temporary happy ending, but Ariosto has distanced the funereal conclusion of Ruggiero's story from the end of his own work. The question of how a temporal process comes to an end had long preoccupied writers of romance, and as earlier essays in this study suggest, diverse treatments of the question evoke differing approaches to temporal experience at large.³⁰ For his part, Ariosto – placing the nuptials of the dynastic hero near the close of a very long text of forty-six cantos and tens of thousands of lines – manipulates the account of Ruggiero in a radical way, stretching it along the whole narrative of his poem. For Ariosto's Ruggiero is far from perfect. This is the genial invention of *Orlando Furioso*, which alters the premises of Boiardo and configures the relationship between Ruggiero and Bradamante in a totally different way.

In the first canto of *Orlando Furioso*, a white cavalier crosses the forest, interrupting, with exquisite timing, Sacripante's amorous assault on Angelica: "*Ecco pel bosco un cavalier venire, / il cui sembiante è d'uom gagliardo e fiero. / Candido come neve è il suo vestire, / un bianco pennoncello ha per cimiero*" [Out of the wood a knight appeared. Stalwart and proud was his mien. His raiment was white as snow, and a white plume crested his helmet] (1.60).³¹ This white cavalier, who only *looks* like a man, is in fact a woman: Bradamante, who, as a later passage will indicate, "*cercando . . . già l'amante suo . . . / così sicura senza compagnia, / come avesse in sua guardia mille squadre . . .*" [was riding in search of her lover . . . she rode without companions, as self-assured as if she had a body-guard of a thousand squadrons] (11.33). In Ariosto's poem it is Bradamante who is in search of Ruggiero, not vice versa, as in Boiardo's poem.³² This inversion of roles will not escape criticism: Tasso, for example, in his *Apologia in difesa della Gerusalemme liberata*, will observe that it is supremely inappropriate for a damsel to rush after her lover, when the opposite is expected:

[I]n *Orlando Furioso* . . . Ruggiero is loved more than he loves, and Bradamante loves more than she's loved, and she follows Ruggiero and tries to free him from prison; she's the one who performs all the tasks and does all the deeds which would pertain rather to a knight striving to win the love of his lady.³³

This initial divergence from the circumstances indicated by Boiardo foreshadows the new relationship between the two ancestors of the Este house and totally reshapes Ruggiero's story. In *Orlando Furioso*, Ruggiero is on his way towards perfection throughout the narrative, but he is far from being the complete reincarnation of the chivalric virtues of old. Though in this essay it is not feasible to discuss in detail Ruggiero's

Bildungsroman, I would like at least to call attention to the true revolution – a sort of Aristotelian denouement – that marks the development of Ruggiero's character in the middle of *Orlando Furioso*, between cantos xxii and xxv. Up to this point Ruggiero has been more an object of love than a passionate lover himself: his erotic distraction on the Island of Alcina, not to mention his sudden, predatory sexual impulse towards Angelica, has shown us a lover only in progress, as it were, certainly quite distant from the high standard required for Bradamante's future spouse, and very distant from what we had seen, or at least glimpsed, in Boiardo's *Innamorato*. His repeated slippages into the traps of Atlante – the castle in the Pyrenees, Alcina's Island, the enchanted palace in the woods – have put him in a situation of impotence, leaving his chivalric prowess largely unexpressed.

A drastic change happens between cantos xxii and xxv. Ruggiero is freed from Atlante's frustrating control (after the enchanted palace the old master will just give up on trying to protect Ruggiero from his destiny); Ruggiero finally re-encounters Bradamante, declares his love, promises to be baptized and embrace Christianity, and starts, finally, to act as a "man." Conversely Bradamante begins losing her "masculine" traits and starts acting as a "woman." The transformation is finely crafted all through the second part of the poem, but already in canto xxii, at the castle of Pinabello, Ruggiero, having to confront the champions of the local lord, shows who is the "true man" in this relationship:

*Bradamante pregò molto Ruggiero
Che le lasciasse in cortesia l'assunto
Di gittar de la sella il cavalliero
Ch'avea di fiori il bel vestir trapunto;
ma non poté impetrarlo, e fu mestiero
a lei far ciò che Ruggire vòlse a punto.
Egli vòlse l'impresa tutta avere,
e Bradamante si stessee a vedere.*

(xxii.63)

Bradamant entreated Ruggiero as a favour to leave it to her to unhorse the knight whose fine surcoat was picked out with flowers, but she could not sway him and had perforce to do as he wanted, that is, to leave the whole challenge to him while she looked on.

And when he inadvertently wins the struggle with the help of his magic shield – a resource he had used insouciantly earlier in the poem – he feels deprived of his true merit. He blushes; he is overwhelmed with shame; and he ends up getting rid of this ambiguous and by now dangerous help – he throws

the magic shield into a deep well.³⁴ In the meantime, Bradamante, incapable of curbing her bellicose instincts, attacks Pinabello himself, follows him in the woods ... and loses sight of Ruggiero again. The *Bildungsroman* is evidently dual: the making of Ruggiero and the making – or unmaking? – of Bradamante become the making of the *couple* Ruggiero/Bradamante. Their mutual adjustments and the interplay of their public and private lives represent the first example I know in Italian literature of a true romantic story: that is, a story that traces a substantial character's development, along the curve of an emotional progression, displayed over a protracted stretch of time, through a carefully described series of significant situations.

As a last comment, it should be stressed that between canto xxii and canto xxv lies the account (in canto xxiii) of Orlando's folly, the *furore* of the title. The strategic entanglement of such episodes tells us quite clearly that as Orlando is destroyed by love and practically exits the plot, the responsibility of the story, of a positive love story, passes on, and becomes Ruggiero's – and of course Bradamante's – responsibility.

But what about the master fiction of Boiardo, *le discours du pouvoir* of the *Innamorato*, the "incredible genealogies" of the Este rulers? To be sure, Ariosto dutifully inherits the dynastic invention of Boiardo, although the descent of Bradamante and Ruggiero, down to Ariosto's own masters and benefactors, is presented not to Ruggiero, but to Bradamante (in canto iii), by Merlin and through the intervention of the enchantress Melissa.³⁵ The Este destiny is, at least in the first half of Ariosto's poem, firmly in female hands. But Boiardo's beautiful fiction just falls to pieces in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. It is true that Ruggiero is still of Trojan blood; it is true that the Este rule is, quite conventionally, a new golden age. But what is missing – an omission that causes the whole edifice to disintegrate – is the return of ancient Arthurian chivalry. In Ariosto the new Este golden age is nothing more than a glittering varnish on a contemporary reality that Ariosto contemplates with the irony and the frustration of a modern – that is, post-1494 (after the French invasion) – Italian. The bold optimism of Boiardo has vanished. Arthur is never mentioned. The old chivalry of early Britain will not come back. The venerable operation of the Arthurian *ventura* is deeply deconstructed: Ariosto's cavaliers are not *cavalieri erranti*, "knights errant": they are, at best, very curious voyagers.³⁶ No new hero, on the other hand, is born perfect. Ruggiero and Bradamante's long, uneven, contradictory itineraries towards perfection tell us that these are times when virtue must be patiently earned. These are times when the protagonists of a romance, and the ancestors of an illustrious dynasty, must agree to submit themselves to the fatigue of a long education.

Finally, it must be observed that Ariosto's lesson seems to have gone largely unheard. As I have already noted, grandiose constructs of legitimization via legendary dynasties will become a prolonged feature of European history. Not without, naturally, recurring doubts and self-deprecating ironies. In the middle of the so-called war on precedence, the new duke of Florence, Cosimo I, commented about the vain pretences of his rival, the duke of Ferrara:

And in this respect, indeed, I cannot deny that our illustrious house is inferior, since it had no such poet to celebrate it, by giving it such a radiant and noble beginning: I mean, Ruggiero, who eclipsed the splendor of Orlando and of all the other paladins [*dico di quel Ruggieri el quale estinse lo splendore di Orlando e di tutti li altri paladini*], as the sun does when it rises and eclipses the light of the other lesser stars. For myself, I cannot say that I am born of a duke of Florence, nor do I care much whether I can or not, for I have not decided properly whether it is more laudable to be born or to become a duke in the way I have done [*qual sia maggior laude o el nascere o el diventare in quel modo che ho fatto io*].³⁷

One feels sorry that Cosimo did not follow his impulse and did not have the courage to dismiss altogether the incredible genealogies of his time. He obviously had in mind his Machiavelli, who in the second chapter of *The Prince* had dismissed the *principati ereditari*, that is, exactly the kind of principalities which could claim incredible genealogies, as less interesting than the *principati nuovi*. Cosimo, *principe nuovo*, was not iconoclastic enough to proclaim the superiority of somebody who created a dynasty over somebody who just inherited it. Instead, as we know, he let himself become entangled with some particularly incredible genealogies of his family and of the city he ruled.³⁸ Fortunately, the household of Priam was large enough to provide ancestors for everybody in Europe.

*Temporality and narrative structure in European
romance from the late fifteenth century
to the early sixteenth century**

Marco Praloran

Translated by Ruben Borg

In a discussion aimed at mapping out a history, or perhaps still more significantly a morphology of the Western narrative tradition from the early verse romances of the twelfth century to the narrative poems and romances of the Renaissance, it seems to me extremely important, even essential, to articulate a comparatist perspective. This is all the more the case the more closely we approach the modern era. For instance, if we look at the Italian and Spanish traditions, to which I would like to devote a few opening remarks, we have to acknowledge that in both traditions the French prose romances of the thirteenth century still provide a prominent model of operation. Admittedly, this may be viewed as a reflection of the social character of literary works, as the symbolic values of French chivalry and feudalism still exert a strong attraction on the Spanish and Italian aristocracies. But that is only part of the picture; what is at stake is also the structure, the very form of narration.

In this regard we encounter different degrees of imitation. It is curious to note that from the middle of the fifteenth century the Italian tradition picks up narrative elements that Spanish culture chooses to set aside: namely, the polyphonic construction of the plot, which concentrates not

* *Editor's note.* In an early phase of the collective project Marco Praloran provided for this essay a bibliographical introduction on the historical development of scholarly attitudes toward *entrelacement* in medieval and Renaissance literature. Though in the published volume this introduction has been omitted and minor technical adjustments have been made elsewhere in the essay, the text that follows is extremely close to the main text that he provided for the chapter. Parts of the essay present material published in Italian in his study "L'utopia del poema cavalleresco alla fine del Quattrocento," in *Boiardo, Ariosto e i libri di battaglia: atti del convegno, Scandiano-Reggio Emilia-Bologna, 3-6 ottobre 2005*, ed. Andrea Canova and Paola Vecchi Galli, Serie Centro studi Matteo Maria Boiardo, 53, Studi boiardeschi, 7 (Novara: Interlinea, 2007), pp. 15-39; reprinted in Marco Praloran, *Le lingue del racconto: studi su Boiardo e Ariosto*, "Europa delle Corti," Centro studi sulle società di antico regime, Biblioteca del Cinquecento, 143 (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009), pp. 99-123. The early passing of Marco Praloran prevented him from reviewing the chapter in its present form but not from making this lasting contribution to the cooperative study.

on the *ethos* of an individual character but on the moral values associated with the portrayal of the hero and on the relations between the idealized figure and contemporary social mores.¹ One might advance many hypotheses – and many indeed have been constructed – to explain this divergence. Above all, it is necessary to consider the complexities of Italian culture, beyond the particulars of the literary establishment. To this end we would do well to take into account the commitment of fifteenth-century Italy to linguistic and technical experimentation. The fascination of the culture with visual experience and the nature of the image, with matters of space and pictorial dramatization, was bound to have a profound impact on an intellectual of Boiardo's caliber. Correspondingly, it could not but lead to an investment in the formal features of narrative, in plot as a means of structural orchestration.²

For its part, the Italian public was prepared to privilege aspects of a literary work pertaining to the montage of imaginative material rather than to the material itself. It was also primed to appreciate – in Ariosto, particularly, but also in Boiardo – the superimposition of various literary echoes: from Virgil to Dante, and from Ovid to Petrarch.³ Such issues were not as pivotal in the reception of the Spanish romances. This was because, among other factors, the intellectual disposition of the Spanish public was considerably less sophisticated. Attached to the immediate, “primary” sense of the narrative, most readers in that public identified fully with their heroes, whose characterizations, free of ambiguity and grey areas, were in turn ideally suited to the process of identification.

The ways in which the world of Arthurian myth is reclaimed in early modernity are thus fundamentally opposed. And in this sense there is a chance that the study of one tradition will help, by way of contrast, to shed light upon the other. We do know, after all, that versions of the principal Iberian romances – the translation, now lost, of the *Tirant lo Blanch*⁴ as well as Bernardo Tasso's adaptation of the *Amadis* – enjoyed considerable success in Italy. Similarly, both the *Furioso* (whose extraordinary fortune throughout Europe is well documented) and the *Innamorato* were read in Spain.⁵ Hence, it seems to me valuable to compare four works that, in my view, represent the major developments in a supranational tradition – works that were written or published within a few crucial years of each other: *El Tirant lo Blanch*, the *Innamoramento de Orlando* (or *Orlando Innamorato*), the *Amadis de Gaula*, and the *Orlando Furioso*.

On the evidence of the Tissoni Benvenuti/Montagnani critical edition of Boiardo's work, along with the research underlying the edition, the final draft of Book III of the *Innamoramento de Orlando* appears to have had an

even more extensive compositional history than was previously imagined.⁶ The writing process, begun in the early 1470s and continuing through the early 1490s, was shaped by a rich sequence of events, of new fashions and cultural forces affecting the tastes of both the general public and the ruling elite, not to mention the production and circulation of printed books. As a result of this history, Boiardo's long poem was exposed to a series of ever-changing, often discordant influences, and it is for this reason, aside from an inherent aesthetic disposition, that it can be said to constitute an eminently experimental work – experimental in the sense that the author was wont to modify his original conception in the course of writing without going to the trouble of revising the previously completed material in light of the latest changes. The fact that the *Orlando Innamorato* eludes, through the very processes by which it came to be written, those requirements of coherence and uniformity that are essential to the classicism of the *Furioso* (but also to the conception of Cieco da Ferrara's *Mambriano*, which remains obscure to us in many aspects) is therefore highly significant and symptomatic of the overall trajectory of its writing. Indeed, the work of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti has shown that the break between the second and third books of the poem is not the only one of its kind. It is possible to discern other disruptions in the creative process, shifts in the author's ideological position that are tied, in essence, to the interests of patronage. [On patronage and *Orlando Innamorato*, see [Chapter 10](#) in this volume. – ed.]

Nevertheless, the work remains faithful, in its own peculiar way, to a stylistic design announced at the outset. It preserves a “narrative model” (to borrow Segre's influential phrase)⁷ established in the very first cantos of Book 1: a model founded on the technique of interlacement as derived from the great Arthurian romances of the thirteenth century (especially, I would say, the *Tristan en prose*). Yet it is also indebted, in equal measure, to Carolingian material, the subject matter of which was the stuff of Italian chivalric poems written in *ottava rima*. Not enough emphasis has been given to the fact that the use of interlacement during the second half of the fifteenth century was by no means an intuitive choice for modern texts aiming to revive the culture of medieval chivalry. If we think of the two most important coeval works produced in Europe on the theme of Arthurian adventures – Malory's work in England and the beautiful Catalan romance *El Tirant lo Blanch* by Joanot Martorell – we have to observe, first of all, that Boiardo preserves verse instead of using prose (and this is without question a typically Italian characteristic), and second, that he maintains a polyphonic plot-structure, whereas the other two texts tend decidedly, though in different ways, toward monody.

In *Le Morte Darthur*, which was completed in 1469–70 and published for the first time in 1485 in London, the original plot of the Vulgate (*Lancelot*, *Queste*, and *Mort Artu*) is disarticulated and subjected to a process of reduction. A few great adventures are abstracted from the grand scheme and narrated in sequence, without regard for the rules of cyclical composition. Each of these adventures constitutes a romance; the last one, *The Tale of the Death of King Arthur*, is adapted in part from the *Mort Artu*. Clearly, Malory skirts the dangers presented by the conventions of continuous construction and deferral, both mainstays of interlaced narrative. In so doing, he caters to the taste of an audience that had become unaccustomed to those prodigious feats of memory indispensable for a coherent reading of medieval romances. As Eugène Vinaver points out, Malory's method is to unscramble the themes and redistribute them in sequence: one after the other, rather than one *during* the other.⁸

In *El Tirant lo Blanch*, written in the 1460s and published for the first time in 1490, the plot-structure is fully coherent, but this coherence does not rest on a plurality of lines, on "polyphony." Tirant is always at the center of the narrative. The book is the story of his life and his deeds: from his beginnings as a young knight in England until his death en route to Constantinople after a victorious campaign.⁹ Thus one finds, in these two fifteenth-century masterpieces of the chivalric tradition, relatively little development by narrative diffraction, as it were. Meaning tends not to be produced *both* continuously, through the sense that accrues to particular events in their chronological distribution, *and* compositely, as one event sheds light on the other by juxtaposition. The process is mainly sequential in operation; one event is the cause of another in accordance with the Aristotelian model of plot-structure. Moreover, the emotional content of the narrative normally also unfolds, and is presented to the reader, in a linear rather than a composite arrangement. We generally follow a straight-forward narrative thread and, as the reading progresses, moments of high dramatic tension succeed the more tranquil episodes. Our perspective is limited; the ground that is yet to be covered, the plot's unexpected turns, are regularly ahead of us. It is interesting to note that in the Catalan masterpiece the action is carried out in what could be described, at least within the parameters of fifteenth-century culture, as a realistic setting. Realistic is the representation of time, centered on aspects of day-to-day life that, even when not directly portrayed, are implicitly associated with the steady flow of the heroes' existence. As the priest in *Don Quixote* observes, the *Tirant* is the only Spanish romance in which characters eat, sleep, etc.: theirs is a time patterned on the time of actual life.

We must not forget, after all, that the knights depicted in this work are modeled on real-life knights, the cream of European aristocracy. These were knights who, by their obsessive adherence to the rituals of courtly behavior, desperately sought to carry the spirit of chivalry into modernity. The fact that after the Turkish conquest Tirant succeeds in regaining Constantinople is a utopian sign of the function collectively invested in the figure of the Great Knight – and indeed of the historical significance of his actions. What is most striking about the romance is not the dueling or the themes of arms and warfare (despite the remarkable variety and elegance with which these matters are treated); rather, it is the attention to detail, the extreme care taken when reproducing the entire theatrical and ritualistic apparatus of chivalry: the challenges to duel, the counter-challenges (*lletres de batalla*), the rules of engagement, the arguments, the greetings, the feasts, the ceremonies, etc. The romance celebrates a civilization in its autumnal phase. Indeed, were it not for the energy and sense of vitality with which it infuses its narrative, it might be said to approximate, in spirit and sensitivity, the waning culture of contemporary Burgundy.¹⁰ From this point of view time emerges, once again, as linear and progressive.

But the absence of polyphonic structures in the work can be explained in yet another context. The fact that our understanding of the romance is not based on the contrast between different leading personalities in the book, or on some individual shortcoming that allows us to distinguish the *ethos* of a particular knight from an ideal chivalric model (a difference that comes clearly into relief in the comparison with other knights), is highly significant. Whereas in the case of the Arthurian knights, even the most noble ones, perfection is an unstable condition – continually put into question and in many ways seen as an unattainable ideal (hence the pain and the nostalgia) – for Tirant it is a given. From the outset Tirant is enveloped in perfection; certainly a more banal and stereotypical kind of perfection, but no less true for being so. There is no need, then, to reconstruct meaning by analogy. The sense of the world, its manifestation, is not grasped through a comparison of actions and thoughts that would commit both the book's heroes and its reader to an intelligent evaluation of things. Rather, it is entirely summed up in the deeds of the protagonist.

In the *Inamoramento de Orlando* narrative tension develops otherwise: here the reader's viewpoint does not open exclusively onto the future, onto what is always to come. The event on which we temporarily focus cannot make us forget the effective presence of other narrated worlds that are suspended, that are alive "alongside" and "behind" us. Accordingly, the

work's affective content is promoted not only by the current storyline, but also in the expectation of the other suspended lines, and ultimately in the possibility, always real, that one of these lines may eventually converge with ours. The emotional curve produced by the romance is founded on this principle of continuous segmentation – that is to say, on the art of montage; in Boiardo's resumption of this ancient model what develops in this narrative interplay is not so much meaning as emotional content.¹¹ These profound structural differences help to explain, at least in part, why the characters of the *Tirant* are *used up* in the unfolding of the romance, used and dismissed (killed off, poor souls), with the obvious exception of the protagonist and his friends. Thus they situate themselves irretrievably "behind" our point of view, which is that of the eponymous hero. By contrast, in the *Inamoramento* the principal characters do not die, because they are the structure's main support, its skeleton: to kill off one of the heroes would be to undermine the narrative model on which the work is based. This is why the emotional content of the *Tirant* is to a large extent intrinsic to the "storyline," whereas in the *Inamoramento de Orlando* it inheres in the weave of the plot. Boiardo does not use the interlacing process to advance the significance of the hero's actions (unlike Ariosto, who, in subtle and covert ways, does precisely this); rather, his aim is to create new possibilities of plot-construction.

Now in approaching the world of fifteenth-century courtly idealism (to use Erich Köhler's felicitous phrase)¹² it is necessary to consider the way in which a particular work positions itself within various generic forms. The complex structure of the romance is a device designed to elevate materials of Carolingian derivation.¹³ The polyphonic plot presupposes a certain control over time, a contemplation of temporal structures and a technical ability to organize narratives that implies a high order of composition in the hierarchy of literary genres. This narrative technique breathes life into the source material. It gives it a new form and a new orchestration. It is interesting to note that the objective elements of the tradition call into play, here as always, an entire set of pre-established patterns. Thus, the Arthurian character of Boiardo's episodes – namely the knight's singular quest in a field of limitless adventure, a field strewn with excitement and risk in which one incident follows another at a pace altogether alien to the realist aspect of Arthurian romance – cannot be dissociated from the polyphonic form of the poem's narrated world. In point of fact, a purely epic setting would have made it impossible to carry out a genuine interlaced narrative. To speculate on which of these elements may have first determined the other would be pointless. What is

certain is that the two are co-implied; and that the returns for the genre of Italian chivalric poetry were considerable. Moreover, they were, in many ways, easier to “imitate” than the equally remarkable innovations of Pulci, which consisted chiefly in providing the sparse idiom of the *cantari* with a veneer of heightened expressivity. In so doing, Pulci inevitably stressed the mimetic nature of narrative, drawing his vocabulary from a cultural framework as typical and allusive as that of the Florentine municipal world. Here, as Maria Cristina Cabani has recently shown, the literary tradition (including the *ottava*) was already marked by linguistic tensions that must be construed in terms of expressive tone.¹⁴ Thus one may venture to say that Pulci’s only true follower, at the level of expressive form, was – at least from a certain phase of his writing career – Boiardo himself, but not Ariosto, and not even the magnificent literary tradition that established itself in those few years, between the third book of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* and the first draft of the *Furioso*.¹⁵ Boiardo’s imitators were nonetheless numerous; and every single one of them – even Cieco da Ferrara in his *Mambriano* – felt the need to employ the technique of interlaced narration, though in ways that were far less experimental than those of the Count.

Boiardo’s masterpiece, left unfinished in 1494, is an eminently open work. It contains within it, encoded in its very structure and narrative program, a germ of incompleteness – or, to be more precise, the sense of an infinite openness and of a progressively expanding plot. [On narrative closure in earlier romance, see [Chapters 4–8](#). – ed.] Let us reflect, then, on the “unfinished” nature of the work, limiting our analysis to the following two aspects of it: (a) the interlaced plot as objective element, and (b) the preservation of the world (i.e., the need to preserve the world of Arthurian adventure).

We must begin with a minor premise. We do not know what Boiardo actually read. We are unable to ascertain which versions of the great romances in prose he may have perused or what codices he may have owned. It is certain that in seigneurial circles in fifteenth-century Ferrara there was a strong desire to read any courtly romance available: some essential narrative kernels, but also various additions and continuations. This suggests the sense of a narrative world *in progress*, a world that was utterly open. It is therefore possible to surmise, even within a discourse on the logic of genres – i.e., the logic invested in different generic forms in the course of their history – that for Boiardo, composing a work that in its very structure harks back to past models entailed the creation of a text from which it was assumed that other romances might spring (which is indeed what happened) according to a radically counter-classical conception of art.

Characterization in the *Innamorato* is partly mimetic and partly not. To a certain extent characters are anchored in tradition, and as such they are protected by a prohibition: a ban of indestructibility. The great Arthurian romances have an orientation of their own. Since the psychological make-up of the heroes is far richer, elaborated in a cadence of narrated biographical incidents – in other words, since the heroes' life is already fully plotted out – it is difficult to open up a new narrative space, making it seem as though it emerged naturally from within the old material itself. Such a move, on the other hand, is perfectly possible with the great Carolingian heroes whose death, admittedly, is already narrated (Orlando at Roncisvalle; Rinaldo in Cologne), but narrated in such a way as to seem disengaged from the rest of the plot, like an isolated event. In the case of Lancelot, all we are able to add is “the story of an unknown episode in the hero's life” since *Lancelot*, the *roman en prose*, is devoted (not unlike the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century) to the faithful representation of one character and one destiny retraced along the principal stages of the character's existence.¹⁶

Conversely, in the logic of interlaced narration, every pivotal character represents one line of the plot, one side of its configuration. The model is sustainable precisely because here, contrary to what happens in the Iberian romances (even in *Amadís de Gaula*, *Palmerín*, and their many sequels), the characters live on throughout the narrative. Thus, at the moment in which Boiardo invents a new character, one can assume that it is an investment in structure – one that entails a multiplication of the plot's open potentialities. There can be no doubt that, despite announcing its polyphonic nature from the outset, most notably from the episode of Angelica's flight, the plot of the *Innamoramento de Orlando* grows increasingly complex, more open as it evolves. It suffices to draw a comparison between the first and the second book and to assess the amount of textual space devoted in each to the various characters: for instance, Rinaldo and Orlando.

The structure of the first book is based on a principle of construction that we might describe as “extended alternate montage.” Its most luminous stars are Rinaldo and Orlando (who are manifestly granted more “narrative time” than the other heroes), and its crowning moment is the convergence of the two champions in the duel at Albracca (the one episode that, more than any other in the vast plot of the romance, is able to evoke a sense of closure). The match ends in a tie only because Angelica intervenes. But from that point onwards, the narrative structure changes and the plurivocity of the text intensifies. From that episode, which as I have noted is the closest the plot ever comes to the sense of an ending, the ratio of

narrative time accorded to the two protagonists dwindles progressively. In the second book Agramante enters the scene, but being a “king-figure” his role on the chessboard of narrative interrelations is one of absolute stability, characterized only by a collective dimension. More importantly, Rugiero and Rodamonte come into the picture, and this effectively modifies the poem’s organization. [On some of the implications of the introduction of Rugiero, see [Chapter 10](#). – ed.] Never until then had a polyphonic plot contained so many pivotal characters, so many dominant “voices” carrying equal weight. An exception to this rule is in some ways represented by the *Vulgate* or *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*, where, admittedly, the number of storylines is very extensive. Yet, as Elspeth Kennedy reminds us, all those storylines circle around a single axis that is the life and activity of Lancelot.¹⁷ The deep-seated sense of the work is this: the actions and thoughts of other characters are narrated through the project of meaning that constitutes Lancelot’s world, and it is only in direct confrontation with these characters that Lancelot’s destiny can be understood.¹⁸ In Boiardo this is not so. The characters are truly at the same hierarchical level. This is already evident in Book II. In Book III, not only is the arrangement confirmed, but a new dominant character is added to the cast: Mandricardo. And alongside Mandricardo, the chief innovation of Book III (or, if preferred, of the transition from Book II to Book III) is the dramatic and narrative autonomy afforded by Bradamante. Such a move serves to balance the ratio between Christians and pagans, but its main purpose is to introduce a woman as a great hero *en quête*. Bradamante’s mission constitutes one of the principal features supporting the book’s vast architecture. The elegiac, almost lyrical octaves of the wounded Bradamante, alone and deeply in love, mark out a development that is reprised integrally in the *Furioso*: a woman *en quête*, but a woman who will not conceal her feminine side, unlike Marfisa. Such enormous potential falls intact into Ariosto’s hands and becomes the source of the great combative quest narrated in his masterpiece.

All throughout Europe, starting with the printed editions of the great medieval romances, the opposite tendency prevails, a tendency that is ideally exemplified in the “form” of the *Amadis* by Montalvo, the other great bestseller of Renaissance chivalric culture alongside the *Furioso*. In essence, the *Amadis* limits the polyphonic aspects of the plot and focuses the narrative on the protagonist, on the range of his actions.¹⁹ One must observe, then, that even before the widespread diffusion of Aristotelian poetics, interpreted by sixteenth-century classicism in the strictest possible manner (therefore in rigidly anti-polyphonic terms), this trend was

dominant throughout Europe: in France, in Spain, even in England where, as I remarked previously, Malory's famous work, more or less contemporary with Boiardo's poem, undertook a simplification of the older structure, leaving much of the source material unchanged but disarticulating individual stories from the overall scheme.

As is well known, the *Amadis de Gaula*, printed in its standard version in Saragoza in 1508, is the reworking of a medieval romance probably dating to the fourteenth century – a text of which only a few fragments have survived. Compared to the *Tirant*, the first book of the *Amadis* has a plot that is moderately polyphonic, bearing more clearly than any other section of the romance the signs of its medieval derivation. From chapter 16 onwards the plot develops three lines of action: the story of Amadis, that of his brother Galaor, and finally that of their cousin, Agrages. The technique is very restrained; cuts from scene to scene occur always in moments of relative "calm," when the warriors are out of the line of fire. And the same goes for the chapter breaks, each chapter having been conceived as an autonomous sequence in the narrative.²⁰ The plot's formal division thus facilitates a deeper comprehension of all the events, which is exactly the opposite of what happens in Italy with the two *Orlandi*.

One must further note that the different narrative projects of the heroes are always fully harmonized. In the *Amadis*, the characters are friends and stand by each other, contrary to what happens in the French *romans*, for example *Guiron le courtois*, which in its second part presents an alternate montage of the antithetical quests of Guiron and Danayn. Similarly, the Spanish text distinguishes itself from the Italian tradition, in which the heroes' narrative projects are set in complete contrast (be it in love, war, or merely because of their loyalty to rival factions). It is also significant that the preeminence of Amadis's role in the narrative is never in question: the juxtaposition of storylines does not revolve around this issue, but is simply a matter of variation. In any case, one can surmise that the conception of the *Amadis*, being less realistic than that of the *Tirant* – less committed to a framework designed to mirror contemporary society – demanded a more open narrative construction, one that privileges variety and discontinuity. The technique of interlaced narration, emptied here of its cognitive function, serves to prop up the unfolding of events and to produce variations on the same character-type.

By the second book, as the narrative unfolds in its Mediterranean and oriental setting, the plot-structure takes a monodic turn, veering closer to the model of Greek pseudo-autobiography. Faithful from the outset to the prevailing ideals proclaimed by Catholic kings, ideals of conciliation, and a

new devotion to imperial values, the hero conforms to a standard of perfection and manages to unite, within a single course of action, the pursuit of self-realization and the fulfillment of social mores. Naturally, the love story with Oriana is seamlessly inserted into this logic of non-conflictual composition. And in a way it is also for this reason that, as the romance unfolds, matters of war and scenes of an epic quality come to replace more and more frequently the adventures at court.²¹

If adventure in the Arthurian universe is all the more important for the variegation it creates in the character's interiority, here such considerations are out of place. Characters in *Amadis* are static, unchangeable. To be sure, the *Amadis* does offer a representation of character-interiority, but it is an interiority based on an anthropological model very different from the medieval version. Emotions flare up suddenly and seem to owe nothing to the struggle between societal values and the self. In short, one cannot escape the impression of a formulaic psychology and an extremely limited vocal range. Perhaps the reason for this is that the heroes of this work, unlike their counterparts in the romances of the thirteenth century, are unaffected by changes in circumstance or by the confrontation with other characters; they remain themselves, reacting like automatons in ways that are entirely predictable. Such a psychological state of affairs cannot coincide with a display of self-awareness on the part of the individual character, or even with an authentically introspective evaluation of his actions. Rather, it is formulated as a series of blatant effects aimed at stirring the public (more often than not, a female public) to a heightened emotional response.

The writing of the *Furioso* followed directly on the third book of the *Inamoramento de Orlando*. But by then the conditions of literary production in Italy had changed significantly. Boiardo's experimental flair, his stylistic eclecticism, was out of vogue in the classicist environment that prevailed at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (a classicism that was indeed already fashionable during the last twenty years of the fifteenth century, as we gather from the *Rime* and the *Arcadia* of Sannazaro).²² Not only is the first edition of the *Furioso* very different from Boiardo's masterpiece in this respect; the style of the *Mambriano*, a work published in the first decade of the sixteenth century, must also have seemed more modern to the contemporary reader. Boiardo's much-discussed fortune depends entirely on an astonishing thematic inventiveness and a masterfully executed plot-structure that, in spite of the hybrid language, ensured its success. In the last analysis, it is with the help of the *Furioso* that Boiardo's vehemently experimental plot-structure imposed itself on sixteenth-century Italian taste.

The types of *entrelacement* featured in the *Furioso* are well known. Some of the scholars contributing to this volume have brought into relief Ariosto's peculiar handling of scene-cuts and have helped clarify the very concept of adventure invested in his work.²³ Compared to the *Amadis*, its great rival in the European tradition, the *Furioso* poses a continuous challenge to received temporal structures, disrupting the linear course of reading and dismantling the idea of an objective temporality. How well these structural tensions can be said to reflect the characters' interrelations was cogently demonstrated by Daniel Javitch some years ago.²⁴ Later I shall return to this issue. At this juncture we should note that the popularity of the *Furioso* throughout Europe was due chiefly to the elegance of its style and the beauty of individual episodes, rather than to its formal organization, which was perceived to be as chaotic as it was plot-driven. [On sixteenth-century criticism of Ariosto's work, see [Chapters 12](#) and [13](#). – ed.] Ultimately, the narrative structure of the *Amadis* was more easily assimilated to sixteenth-century European taste than the lavish brilliance of the *Furioso*. As the priest remarks to the barber in the first chapters of the *Quixote*: language and style are the principal causes of the excellence of Ariosto's "romance." The comment is not only extremely apt but also symptomatic of a widespread opinion, held not only in Spain but also in France, and certainly not limited to the late sixteenth century.

But given the limits of this essay I would like to consider two final issues: the literariness of the *Furioso*, and the work's ties to the Arthurian universe. One might say that in the *Furioso* there is an ostensive literariness which corresponds, in essence, to what we call Ariosto's classicism: the work reflects the entire history of the Italian lyric, and a large part of the Latin tradition, in a process of synthesis that develops around a recognizably Petrarchan technique. For the first time the readers of sixteenth-century Europe were able to discover, in a work of narrative, the plasticity, the fine balance, the resonances of a language that had no equal in the modern world – that was in fact unapproachable. It is well-known, for instance, that Ariosto shared none of the perplexity that the French classicists, chief among them Ronsard, felt toward the overly dramatic tone of Petrarch's love poems.²⁵

Nevertheless, we must observe that the literariness of the *Furioso* is also a new narrative resource. Ariosto's Petrarchism can be ascribed not only to the elegant style of composition but also, more pertinently, to the complex manner in which imitation conditions the form of the plot.²⁶ The subjective drama that permeates the work, and the intense imagery stirred up by the pressures of interiority, are born of an extremely personal reading of

Petrarch's poems. At the level of literary technique this is clearly discerned in Ariosto's treatment of syntax, in the logic of enumeration, in the forms of repetition, etc. It is not so much a matter of applying a lyrical coating to the narrative as of devising, through a peculiar adaptation of the Petrarchan model, new, hitherto unimagined possibilities of narration.

It is worth dwelling a little on the nature of these possibilities. In the first place, Ariosto employs a complex Petrarchan syntax to create effects of delay (*ritardo*) and slow motion (*rallentato*). But whereas in the *Canzoniere* these techniques function in such a way as to reflect somehow the non-linear and non-sequential character of the poet's meditations, in the narrative their role is to bring about surprising changes in rhythm – changes that suspend the narration in its inner stages and so stimulate the reader's emotive response in anticipation of a resolution. Such effects are especially evident in Ariosto's deployment of complex syntactic constructions and proleptic subordinate clauses. This is a difficult point to elaborate in purely linguistic terms, and it is necessary here to make a careful distinction between *langue* and *parole*. If on the one hand it is only natural that the elevation of the *Furioso* to a more prestigious literary form should coincide with a more sophisticated syntax, on the other hand it is notable that such a syntactic choice (*langue*) is made by Ariosto in accordance with the text's most specific stylistic demands. A comparison between Ariosto and Bembo in this regard is instructive. In both cases we are presented with a high linguistic register, clearly reminiscent of Petrarch, but it is only in Ariosto that the Petrarchan model is invested with such rhetorical power as to affect, in more ways than one, the content of the narrative. The complexity of the syntax and the proleptic use of subordinate clauses break the regularity of the narrative's rhythm, producing an effect that might be compared to the slow extension of an elastic band that, once released, suddenly bounces forward. Naturally, such an effect is not possible in the Spanish romances, which develop in an essentially linear fashion, much like a chronicle, insisting on very simple and clear logical relations between different parts of the plot and often resorting to paratactic constructions.

To be sure, Ariosto's peculiar use of subordinate clauses is not the only device displaying this type of stylistic surplus. Another instance of Petrarchan borrowing, resulting in great stylistic virtuosity, involves Ariosto's ability not merely to slow down the pace of the narrative but, far more radically, to break up one of its chief constituent elements: linear progression. Imitating a typical procedure of Petrarch's *canzone*, Ariosto uses the *ottava* in the manner of a stanza that is linked to other stanzas by a

principle of theme-and-variation. In a complex game of delayed repetitions, the opening line of one octave is reprised in the next octave, whereupon time is somehow brought back to the earlier moment, and the same action is narrated again from a different point of view. The process is marvelously intricate and obviously impossible to replicate in prose.²⁷ Needless to say, it represents only one of a variety of techniques in Ariosto's stylistic repertoire. But it is precisely here that we may discern the *principium individuationis* of Ariosto's poem as against the narrative form adopted by the Spanish romances. The *Furioso* distinguishes itself at the point at which meter and style begin to have clear implications for the construction of narrative. [On narrative juxtaposition and temporal experience in the later work of Spenser, see [Chapter 14](#). – ed.]

It is no coincidence that in these remarks the subject of time has come up repeatedly as a defining feature of the narrative. It would have been possible to compare the *Furioso* with its contemporary prose works on the basis of lyrical descriptions of landscape, character presentation, expository excerpts (which are numerous and certainly significant), or vividness of dialogue. But it is precisely on the issue of time and its "representation" that the difference between texts emerges most compellingly.

On the level of plot-construction, that is to say the selection and disposition of basic elements in the storyline, Ariosto's polyphonic structure creates some truly surprising effects – for example the tendency to make time virtual. The narrated time that we interpret as real is rather virtual, which is to say that, in essence, it is not what it appears to be.²⁸ In the Aristotelian conception, in the ancient conventions of epic and tragic narration, and also in the Alexandrian romances, time is the vehicle by which events come to be known. It is through the logical (or logico-dramatic) structure of time that we are able to grasp the sense of events. By their correct Aristotelian disposition in the plot they are given their proper meaning. One might assume that the medieval technique of *entrelacement* overturns this idea. But that is not really the case. Different as it may be in conception as well as technique, the representation of time in the great medieval prose romances, above all in the *Lancelot*, is still aimed at making events intelligible.²⁹ The narrator presides over a complex temporal frame that corresponds to the time of the world. Yet through his narrative, which is a mirror of reality, he arranges this time in such a way as to be able "to explain" its complexity to the reader. The invisible relations that bind different adventures are elucidated *through* time and *in* time. To be sure, a casual analysis could not bring any of this to light. But through careful, patient investigation the reader should be able to find in the *roman* access to its covert forms of signification.

The polyphonic structure of interlaced narration thus does not cancel the explanatory function of time; the opposite is the case. The technique of *entrelacement* is born because of the expansion of the narrated world; it arises from the necessity to recount the (chivalric) world in its totality. Time – the narrative conception of time – must therefore be figured differently in order to maintain its function as a means of access to meaning.

But these considerations do not apply to the *Furioso*. Ariosto's conception of time actually hinders the reader's cognitive process. It is difficult to understand what motivates this dynamic, although we are able to say that Ariosto inherits a treatment of time that Boiardo had originally articulated in his *Orlando Innamorato*.

Boiardo plays with an illusionary time in order to invigorate events, to give new thrust to worn-out material. Above all he uses time as an instrument of emotive manipulation and surprise, undermining the convention by which narratives are supposed to represent time objectively. In effect he plays games with time, treating it as a surprise-effect that makes it possible to even out wholly different durations; time thus becomes a configuration of unequal quantities. These games alter the structure of time, as though it were representing some elaborate view, a vast landscape or a city, through distorting lenses. But in Boiardo's poem what is at stake is not a comprehensive interpretation of the sense of events: there is no secret meaning of the world to be investigated. The "artificial" treatment of time is intended above all to manipulate emotions, to provoke surprise and suspense.

In Ariosto's work, on the other hand, there is once again an urge to probe for meaning. I believe that this is due, at least in part, to a new reading of the Old French *romans*. With *Orlando Furioso* the disjunctive effect of narrated time acquires a more complex significance. The representation of time, its form and organization, becomes an almost illegible cipher, subordinated to a narrative project that disables the causal interpretation of events by undermining the coherence of their temporal relations. If we are unable to say what happens first and what happens later, how can we formulate even the slightest interpretation of phenomena? Insofar as our understanding of the temporal priority of different strands of the plot is always belated, we cannot help but perceive the narrated world as chaos. Ariosto's narrative technique is the formal correlative of this world-chaos, governed by the narrator and fully comprehended only by him: the narrator as *artifex*. Always suspended, always uncertain, the reader of the *Furioso* moves across a vast territory, but does not really see the direction in which his path takes him, does not know

whether he is advancing or being dragged backward. In the tradition of Western narrative forms this is immensely significant. The prestige associated with the technique of *entrelacement*, the widespread fascination it exerts, the variety of detail and emotion that it provokes, make it possible for it to withstand much theoretical criticism, even by the late sixteenth century. The technique survives in Tasso (where it comes into contact with the precepts of the *Poetics*), in Spenser, even in Cervantes – and its presence in these texts is more pronounced than is generally thought.³⁰ Despite the decrease in virtuosic effect, the curtailed use of the technique, the loss of polyphonic texture, etc., what continues to matter throughout the Western narrative tradition (from the renewed literary forms of the eighteenth century, mainly in England, through the nineteenth-century novel, to the brink of modernity) is the reappropriation of time as a vehicle of meaning: narrative time devised and regulated not to prevent us from accessing the meaning of events but to make that access possible. This marks an extraordinarily important distinction between the plot of the *Furioso* and what follows it in the development of the European novel.

Perhaps even these brief observations may suggest how the form of time in Ariosto's work, as reflected both in its local structures (syntax, aspects of verbal tenses)³¹ and in its larger patterns, contributes to the production of a supremely unstable narrative. It is unstable not simply because of the temporal (one is tempted to say Cubist) disarticulation of the plot-sequence, which makes it very difficult to situate the individual event in the context of other events, but also because events are always viewed from an angle that impedes their objective evaluation on the part of the reader as well as the characters. Characters in the *Furioso* are repeatedly shifting amid the kaleidoscopic configurations of Ariosto's turning narrative. Such characters are marked not by individual "psychologies"³² but by their relative positions in the flux of events, and the great warriors of Ariosto's poem are embattled not only because of adversaries, but above all because of the complex implications of their actions. The sense of complexity in the temporal world, the ambiguity that underlies all seeing and knowing, are Ariosto's homage, filtered through his personal form of Petrarchism, to the *entrelacement* of medieval French romance.

Matters of fabulation and fact: shifting registers

The disparagement of chivalric romance for its lack of historicity in sixteenth-century Italian poetics

Daniel Javitch

When did the critical opinion that chivalric romances were ahistorical become firmly established? From virtually the earliest stages in the development of such romances it was possible to encounter the view that their matter was largely illusory and removed from the truth of history.¹ But it was not until the second half of the sixteenth century, in Italian discourse on poetry and poetics, that the made-up and fantastic matter of the *romanzo* (as the genre was called) became repeatedly and negatively measured against the truth of history and of historical writing. Such a bias is particularly discernible in the debate about the superiority of classical epic over vernacular chivalric romance which engaged Italian *litterati* from the late 1540s until the end of the century. While this debate, and its development into the dispute over the relative merits of Ariosto and Tasso, has been the object of study, most notably by Bernard Weinberg, the subject of the *romanzo*'s ahistoricity has not received much attention.² Klaus Hempfer provides a useful, albeit brief, discussion of the issue as it bears on the early critical reception of *Orlando Furioso*,³ but virtually the only article that begins to survey the objections against the romance's mendacity and the genre's lack of historicity is an overview by Stefano Jossa.⁴ The subject needs further exploration.

A recurrent feature of Italian literary criticism in the latter part of the sixteenth century is the charge that the *romanzo* is ahistorical. During this time it becomes conventional for champions of the ancient epic to make a case for epic's greater seriousness on the grounds that its actions have a historical basis, whereas the made-up stories of the romances, even the ones that bring in Carolingian matter – a foundational reference point for a sense of shared history in the *chansons de geste* (Chapter 9 of this volume) – are often considered to have no truth value whatever. But usually such accusations are not elaborated.

For example, in Antonio Minturno's *L'arte poetica* (1563; its first book is one of the earliest efforts to codify epic poetry) the main speaker points out that the Epic poet

bases his imitation on things that have truth in them, or at least things accepted as true [*in cosa, la qual abbia del vero, o pur accettata come se fusse vera*], because there can be no doubt that Aeneas came to Italy and acquired the kingdom of the Latins and the Rutulians, or that the things described in the *Iliad* were the most memorable that happened in that war. . .

The writer of Romances, on the contrary, feigns what never existed, without any regard for truth [*All 'ncontro lo scrittore de' Romanzi senza aver punto riguardo alla verità finge quel, che non fu mai*]: while neither written history nor fame gives any testimony to the love or madness of Orlando, yet Boiardo feigned that he was in love and Ariosto that he went mad.⁵

Aside from criticizing the romance authors for the baseless fantasies that make up the Arthurian strain of their narratives, Minturno also faults them for having fictionalized Carolingian matter.

He was not the first to do so. Objections to the falsehoods of Boiardo's and Ariosto's romances and to their unhistorical depictions of Orlando had been voiced since the 1540s. In turn, champions of the *Orlando Furioso* tried to offset such charges by claiming that its contents often had some basis in history. For example, in his *Spositione sopra l'Orlando furioso* (1549–50) Simone Fornari challenged those who doubted Ariosto's historical claims, by maintaining that the reason Ariosto called his poem a *historia* was

because he wants it to be understood that his inventions are founded on a truthful base, so that what he tells does not seem from beginning to end an impudent lie. And that's because the plots of romance are considered to be made up primarily of false and empty trifles.⁶

"*Vanità*" and the epithet "*vana*," as in "*istoria vana*," were the terms regularly used to describe the imaginary and incredible contents of romance plots. Fornari sought to free the *Furioso* from such dismissive epithets. So anxious was he to preempt accusations against the unbelievable occurrences in Ariosto's poem, that he took quite seriously the poet's jesting references to Turpin, the original chronicler of the Carolingian *gesta*. Ariosto, Fornari claims at one point, was most vigilant in "choosing matter that was based on truth. . . And that's the reason that he so often cites Turpin, who amply composed the chronicles of the matter of France."⁷ Actually, when Ariosto's narrator invokes Turpin, his intent is ironic: far from warranting the truth of the fantastic events that are being narrated, the jocular references to Turpin's chronicle usually serve to flaunt the fictionality or incredible nature of the narrative.⁸ But Fornari had to ignore the irony of Ariosto's narrator. Intent as he was to find, whenever

possible, a historical basis for the narrative, he had to take the invocation of Turpin's authority at face value.

There were, moreover, other ways that Fornari established the historicity of the *Furioso*. For example, he liked to point out that certain fictional characters and what befalls them in the poem alluded to historical individuals and events that actually took place.⁹ These attempts to make Ariosto's chivalric fiction look more historically grounded may now seem forced. Still, Fornari's very effort to ascribe historicity to the *Furioso* provides evidence of the hostility leveled at chivalric romances for flouting history or for having "profaned" it,¹⁰ and reflects the cultural pressures being exerted on poets to be more historically accountable.

It should be understood that there were champions of chivalric romance, less defensive than Fornari, who did not deny that romance plots consisted of made-up stories while epic matter was based on historical truth. For example, G. B. Pigna, whose *I romanzi* (1554) was one of the pioneer codifications of the genre, openly acknowledged the difference:

All that was stated about imitation applies precisely to Romances. There is this sole difference: that the basis of their imitation is not the same as the one for the Epic poem. Because the epic bases its verisimilar matter on something true. By true I mean histories or legends, that is, actually true, or believed to be true. Romances, on the other hand, have no regard whatever for the truth. . . .¹¹

The best *romanzatori*, Pigna goes on to suggest, have to be sure that their invented plots observe verisimilitude since their untrue matter is more prone to transgress it. On the other hand, epic poetry, as its champions were quick to point out, was much more likely to observe verisimilitude precisely because its plots were based on something "*vero*," the truth of history, and not on something made up. The pursuit of verisimilitude and credibility, which becomes increasingly pronounced in Italian poetics after 1550, partly serves to explain why a basis in history becomes increasingly desired of narrative poets. This is not to say that the desire itself originates in early modern Italy. As previous chapters in this volume suggest, the drive to give historical dimensions to imaginative discourse had long informed the development of romance at large, from the adoption of "authenticating" prose in medieval France (Chapter 3) to the historicizing turns of Grail romance in medieval Germany (Chapter 5). But these sixteenth-century Italian critiques, composed by theorists of narrative, give the demand for historical reference a broad conceptual rationale and a sharp analytic edge.

One can certainly discern in Italian narrative poetry from the middle of the sixteenth century onward a turn to subject matter that is historically grounded. For example, Trissino's *Italia liberata dai goti* (1547–48) treated the war between the Romans and the Goths in the sixth century; Bolognetti's *Costante* (1566) dealt with the efforts of Ceionius Albinus, the constant one, to free the Emperor Valerianus from his Persian captors in 260; and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) was based on the First Crusade.¹² While the mendacities of romance are not openly repudiated in the poems of these works as they announce their historical subjects, their authors' decision to treat such subjects was prompted, in no small part, by the establishment's criticism of the incredible nature of romance fiction.

It is also in order to dissociate modern heroic poetry from the falsities of romance that in his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* (composed in the early 1560s) Torquato Tasso sets as his first requisite that the subject of the heroic poem be drawn from history. The subject matter, Tasso writes,

is invented . . . or is drawn from chronicles of history [*o si finge . . . o si toglie dall'istorie*]. In my opinion, however, material taken from chronicles is much the better, since the epic poet must try for verisimilitude in every part of his poem [*dovendo l'epico cercare in ogni parte il verisimile*] . . . and it is not verisimilar that an illustrious action, such as those in an heroic poem, would not have been written down and passed on to the memory of posterity with the help of history. (p. 100)¹³

Tasso makes clear how the historical subject contributes to the need for the epic poet to observe verisimilitude. His request that the epic subject be based in history is therefore often taken to be an elaboration of Aristotle's directive in [chapter 9](#) of the *Poetics*, but such is not really the case. In that chapter (*Poetics* 1451b 15) Aristotle had stated that **tragic** poets stick to names of men whose existence has been attested since this lends greater credibility to their plots, given that what has occurred is evidently possible. Tasso does appropriate this reasoning when he claims that epic plots have to be grounded in history in order to secure the audience's belief. But there is no allowance in Tasso, as there **was** in Aristotle, for invented stories, as long as they remain true to probability. The epic poet has to turn to history, Tasso maintains, because, as he observes above, the epic deals with actions so illustrious and memorable that they cannot have been left unchronicled. That historical record has to be the basis of the epic plot. Aristotle makes no such argument. Tasso's insistence on the historicity and credibility of the epic subject is prompted less, I contend, by Aristotelian

theory than by his desire to disown the made-up and non-verisimilar matter of the chivalric romance.

I would like to propose, moreover, that Tasso's requisite of historical subject matter which endows the poem with greater credibility is part of his desire to show, for the most part implicitly, that heroic poetry shares many of the qualities ascribed to history. Fully aware as Tasso was of Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, he still wanted to arrogate for poetry some of the attributes that made history the serious and dignified discourse it was deemed to be. History writing enjoyed greater status and authority as a discourse than did poetry at the time Tasso was composing his *Discorsi* in the early 1560s. Why was it specially valued?

Many of the reasons are voiced in contemporary praises of history, two quite representative examples of which are Dionigi Atanagi's *Ragionamento della Istoria* (1559) and Jacques Amyot's preface ("Aux lecteurs") to his translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, also first published in 1559. Both authors give numerous reasons that warrant the status and worth of history. Here are some of the virtues they both praise:

- The reading of history is the most profitable occupation for serious, judicious, and responsible individuals. Yet it actually provides a Horatian mix of both profit and delight, and some of its pleasure stems from the learning that it imparts.
- It always professes to tell the truth. By dealing with what had once taken place it can command belief in its readers.
- By recording and commemorating great human deeds and affairs it not only serves as the storehouse of cultural memory but is the most durable monument that men leave of their deeds.
- It offers its readers compelling ethical exempla. By past examples it teaches them to judge "things present, and to foresee things to come so that they may know what conduct to like and follow, and what to dislike and eschew."¹⁴

Tasso seeks to arrogate for heroic poetry all the above virtues to show that it is as serious as history. For instance, Tasso sees that epic poetry also serves as a nation's or a culture's memory by recording its great, decisive events. While he acknowledges that delight is poetry's end, he wants it to combine a Horatian mix of profit and delight, and he also maintains that some of its pleasure stems from the wisdom it imparts. As in the case of history, profit is also derived from epic's exemplary characters. In fact, unlike Aristotle, Tasso distinguishes epic from tragic protagonists by making the former embody "*il sommo delle virtù*" or "*l'eccesso del vizio*"

(*Discorsi*, p. 12) so that they serve the same didactic function as history's exemplars.

Tasso's demand that the epic poem be based on history is part of his agenda to make poetry more similar to history. The historical basis of the epic poem contributes, as we saw, to the verisimilitude that must pervade it by enabling the poem to command the kind of belief that is similarly triggered by the historian's reliable representation of past events. To be sure, poetry does not consist of a record of the unadulterated truth, but it has to be like the truth, and never challenge or even tax the credibility of its readers.

If, as I propose, Tasso wanted his readers to recognize that heroic poetry possessed the virtues that made history a serious and worthy discourse, one can understand why Tasso wanted to purge poetry of the vain delectation and the unfounded falsehoods that were associated with chivalric fiction. When, at one point, Amyot compares history to poetry, he maintains that history's seriousness and gravity stem from its grounding in plain truth, whereas poetry is less reliable because it enhances and exaggerates the truth for the sake of delight.¹⁵ In his more extensive comparison of poetry and history Atanagi is less negative about the poet's freedom to invent his subject matter, but nonetheless he also makes it quite clear that, compared to the poet's unrestrained fantasies, the historian's obligation to confine himself to what happened, to "*la verità del fatto*," makes him more serious, albeit more austere.¹⁶ Tasso well understood that if poetry was to be on some par with history in terms of its credibility and seriousness, it had to purge itself of fanciful exaggerations, the mendacities it was accused of representing, most of all in the inventions of romance fiction.

From readers familiar with Tasso's poetry and theory I can anticipate objections that Tasso did not have to be so defensive about poetry vis-à-vis history, aware as he was that it sought to represent more than the particulars of history. After all, he knew Aristotle's *Poetics* all too well. Why could he not simply pick up on what Aristotle claims in [chapter 9](#) and argue that poetry not only differs from history but is a superior genre because it is more ethically instructive and closer to a universal story of what human actions should be?

It is true that he was familiar with the claims Aristotle made in [chapter 9](#). At the beginning of his second Discourse (the treatise is divided into three Discourses) he rearticulates Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history when he states that

consideration of things as they should have been, not as they were, and regard for universal verisimilitude, rather than truth in the particulars, basically constitute and determine the nature of poetry and distinguish it

from history. Therefore, the poet must first take note whether the subject he chooses to treat contains any event that would be more verisimilar or more wondrous if it happened otherwise or would give more delight for any other reason whatever. All such events that he finds – all events that could better have happened in another way – he may change at will, again and again, and with no respect for fact or history; and he may rearrange the accidents of history in the manner he deems best, combining complete fiction with doctored fact. (p. 112)¹⁷

Tasso goes on to illustrate how Virgil doctored facts, distorted chronology, and falsified history (for example, the love and death of Dido), though he doesn't fail to add that Virgil's inventions were enabled by "*l'antichità de' tempi*," the remoteness in time of his poetic subject.

One might think that this distinction between the truth of poetry and that of history contradicts the prior recommendations that the epic poem treat historical matter and resemble history. By acknowledging that the epic poet has the license to modify or supplement history, as Virgil had done, Tasso wants to make evident that he is not asking the poet to produce a poetic chronicle in the manner of Lucan or a poem as diligently faithful to the historical source as was Trissino's *Italia liberata dai goti*.¹⁸ Still, Tasso is not as self-divided about the epic poet's accountability to history as his differentiating of poetry from history might suggest. The allowance he grants the poet (in the passage above) to manipulate history is followed by qualifications that show how attached he remains to the idea of history as a control for poetry. "Poetic licence [*la licenza de' poeti*], however," he continues,

must not be extended so far that the poet dares to change completely [*ch'ardisca di mutare totalmente*] the ultimate conclusion of the actions he chooses to treat or even of some of those principal and better-known incidents already accepted as true by popular report. He would display such audacity who described Rome as conquered and Carthage as conqueror. . . Homer's audacity would be the same if that were true which some say falsely (though most suitably to their own purpose):

that the Greeks were routed, that Troy was victorious,
and that Penelope was a whore (p. 113)

[*che I Greci rotte e che Troia vittrice,
e che Penelope fu meretrice*].¹⁹

These last lines come from the notorious passage in the thirty-fifth canto of *Orlando Furioso* when, during their visit to the moon, Saint John tells Astolfo that the epic poets altered the truth to serve their interests and

those of generous patrons. Contrary to what is represented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he asserts, the truth was “that the Greeks were routed, that Troy was victorious, and that Penelope was a whore” (*Orlando Furioso* xxxv.27), and in the next octave he claims that Dido was actually chaste, and that her bad reputation was due to Virgilian malice. Clearly Tasso wanted to deny Ariosto’s, or rather St. John’s, claim that the ancient epic poems were so inauthentic. If that were so, Tasso goes on to state, then this “robs poetry of that authority which comes to it from history, and which moves us to conclude that the theme of epic poetry must be based on some history.”²⁰

Once again I would argue that Tasso’s display here of his belief in the authority that history possesses and can confer on poetry is un-Aristotelian. So is his reassertion that historical facts and outcomes serve to control the imaginative flights of poets. For all his awareness of Aristotle’s distinction between poetry and history, Tasso was not as permissive as Aristotle about the poet’s creative elaboration. The freedom from and with history displayed by chivalric romances had shown how unrespected poetry could become if fiction were accorded too much autonomy. By making it more dependent on the truth and credibility of history, Tasso clearly believed he could reclaim Italian poetry from the debased status to which it had been lowered by romance.

The issues that come to the fore here – the truth value of narrative poetry, and the authority of the poet as a purveyor of wisdom – preoccupy Tasso throughout the treatise, not to say his entire work. He knew all too well that poetic representations consisted of falsehoods, but ones that pointed to or even embodied truths not apprehensible in any other verbal medium. These falsehoods had to seem true (“*verisimile*”) – readers had to believe in what the poet made up – if they were to benefit from poetry’s superior truths. Hence the insistence on verisimilitude and credibility. It was because chivalric romance was seen to generate *incredible* falsehoods that its status became so impaired. The *romanzo*’s harsher critics found nothing redeeming about these pleasurable falsehoods and repudiated them as vain and harmful lies. While Tasso (as I point out below) did not want to forsake all the sources of pleasure provided by romance, he did want to make sure that his guidelines would distinguish the make-believe of the modern epic from the vain fantasies attributed to romance.

Before discussing other objections that were leveled against the *romanzo* I want to say that against the accusations that chivalric romances were ahistorical and therefore lacked seriousness one virtually never finds counterclaims that seek to justify romance fictionality for its own sake. Among

Italian defenders of the *romanzo*, I have not been able to find an argument for the peculiar value of fictional constructs precisely because they do **not** correspond or relate to some extra-poetic reality. To my knowledge, no one defends these fictions for what today we would call their "self-referentiality." Given that the critique of the *romanzo*'s lack of historicity was often made by negative comparison to ancient canonical epics which were perceived as grounded in history, what one can find as a counter-argument to this criticism is an exposure of the equally made-up, unfounded history of these ancient epics. Perhaps the most irreverent exponent of this view is Lionardo Salviati, speaking in defense of *Orlando Furioso* against Camillo Pellegrino's charges that the poem did not conform to serious, that is, classical, norms of heroic poetry as admirably as did Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. In contrast to the distinction between epic and romance on the grounds that epic is based on recorded historical events, Salviati asserts in the *Infarinato Secondo* of 1588 that there were no reliable historical versions of the events represented in the Homeric poems, nor, for that matter, of the events represented in the *Aeneid*. Salviati is particularly interesting in his critical treatment of Dictys' and Dares' histories of the Trojan War, which were still widely believed to be the sources of Homer's poems, especially the *Iliad*.²¹ In an essay of this scope I cannot elaborate on Salviati's critique of Dictys and Dares. Let me just note that he points to the glaring differences between Homer's treatment of Achilles and that of Dictys, not to mention the discrepancies between the two so-called historians themselves. He also calls into doubt the claims that these histories were witness accounts of the Trojan War or that they were even known in Greek antiquity by pointing out that Aristotle makes absolutely no reference to these two authors.²² Salviati seems quite aware that Dictys' and Dares' accounts are pseudo-histories composed at a later date than the time of Aristotle, and that the only reason they are still held to be sources of Homer is precisely because the exponents of the higher truth value of epic cannot give up the idea that Homer founded his epic poems on some historical basis. The upshot of Salviati's argument is to counter this notion by demonstrating that Homer and Virgil invented as much of the matter in their poems as Ariosto did in his.

To return to Tasso's *Discorsi*, they constitute the most important "theoretical" reaction to the chivalric romance's lack of historicity, and were probably most influential in reinforcing the idea that epic poetry was serious precisely because, unlike the *romanzo*, it drew upon true chronicled events and was accountable to history. While I have focused on the prejudice against the *romanzo*'s ahistorical matter, the genre was criticized

and marginalized on other, mainly formal, grounds (a critique about form that could itself converge with an orientation toward history, as suggested in the [next chapter](#) of this volume). Tasso, and prior codifiers of epics, denied that the *romanzo* was a distinct modern genre. They did not simply disparage chivalric romance. It was seen as epic's defective opposite, and its defects were invoked as counterexamples to be shunned. Thus, in Minturno's *Arte poetica*, the *romanzo*, Ariosto's included, is shown to consist of transgressions of unchanging formal principles which define heroic poetry, namely unity of action, coherence, and completeness. The discontinuity and the multiplicity of romance plots are particularly criticized. Similarly, in his early *Discorsi* Tasso refutes the notion that *romanzi* have a separate generic identity. According to Tasso the confusing multiplicity, the excessive length, the absence of beginning and end, and the discontinuity of both Boiardo's and Ariosto's romances are not, *pace* defenders of the *romanzo*, some of its formal features as an independent genre. They are structural flaws inherent in episodic narratives that refuse to observe classical, that is, permanently valid, artistic norms of unity and continuity.

Despite the impulse on the part of the champions of epic poetry to reject the romance, it must be understood that such a repudiation was a risky strategy to follow for any practising poet who wanted to enjoy more than a very limited readership. We know that, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Italian poets who sought to compose a modern heroic poem could not ignore the broad appeal of the chivalric *romanzo*, especially Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. They recognized the need to import features of the *romanzo* into their heroic compositions, even while they sought to conform to Homeric–Virgilian precedents. The drawbacks of simply reduplicating classical epic norms were made all too apparent by what turned out to be a disastrous attempt by Trissino to reproduce the Homeric paradigm in his orthodox *Italia liberata dai goti*, composed just before the middle of the century. Trissino's poem was totally unappreciated and soon ignored. On the other hand, Ariosto's unclassical poem was, as Tasso would himself acknowledge, “read and reread [*letto e riletto*] by all ages and both sexes . . . liked and praised by all” (pp. 117–18).²³ Even though Tasso rejected the multiple plot structure of the *romanzo*, he could not afford the risk of losing his readership by not incorporating in his epic some of the other pleasurable ingredients of Ariostean romance, in particular its chivalric *ethos*, its marvelous and erotic dimensions. His critique of the *romanzo*'s deficiencies cloaks the extent to which the features that appealed to a modern audience affect his recommendations.

One might think that his insistence on a historical basis for the epic plot would rule out the Arthurian and even the Carolingian matter of the *romanzo*, but that is not the case. In his sophisticated discussion, in the first *Discorso*, of how far back in time the epic poet should go, Tasso points out that the poet must not attempt to treat historical material that would inhibit his inventiveness. Thus, sacred history, constituting as it does the basis of Church doctrine, is to be avoided because it cannot be changed. Ancient history, on the other hand, is remote enough in time to permit poetic alterations, but if the poet is to avoid anachronisms, it is necessary to describe curious and obsolete customs that may bore modern readers. Modern history obviously permits more contemporary usage and conduct, but it presents another drawback: its great events are too familiar to allow the poet imaginative license. He finally gives preference to a past that is neither too remote nor too recent. "Such are the times [*Tali sono i tempi*]," he writes, "of Charlemagne and Arthur and those which either preceded or succeeded them by a little; and thus it happens that they have supplied innumerable romancers with subjects for poetic composition" (p. 106).²⁴ This statement makes apparent that his rationalization for this middle period, which includes the time of Arthur and Charlemagne, allows the heroic poet to represent the chivalric mores and feats of arms practised in those times, and can therefore justify the inclusion of chivalric exploits of the sort that had been treated by the *romanzatori*, much to the pleasure of their audience.

Soon after his discussion of what past history he should treat, Tasso reasserts that the epic poet has to observe verisimilitude at all times. But he also acknowledges that an epic that does not include supernatural wonders will offer too little delight, and he calls upon the poet to season his poems with such marvels. He does, however, require that the marvels remain believable, an effect the poet can secure by making their divine causes evident and acceptable to orthodox Christian belief. For readers brought up in the Christian faith, the marvelous can remain verisimilar if it can be attributed "to God, to His angels, to demons, or to those granted such power by God or by demons, like saints and wizards and fairies" (p. 103).²⁵ For all his preoccupation with maintaining credibility (which is also his main reason for insisting on the historical basis of the epic plot), Tasso's notion of the Christian marvelous still permits the poet to import basic ingredients of romance by allowing for the inclusion of magic and enchantment. Some of the implications of that view for Tasso's own poetic practice are discussed in the [next chapter](#) of this volume.

It is revealing that despite his classicist insistence on structural unity and continuity, Tasso grants episodic digressions a larger role in ornamenting epic plots than Aristotle or his strict adherents were willing to allow. Tasso does stipulate that digressive episodes have to relate to the *single* end of the poem by dealing with events or individuals that either enable or impede that end. If the episodes serve to impede the progress of the epic's central action, it is understood that they do so temporarily. Still, by allowing the epic poet to introduce episodes that *impede* the plot's resolution, Tasso thereby provides the poet an opportunity to import romance elements. To readers familiar with his *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the ways in which Armida and Erminia distract the Christian warriors from their military goals readily illustrate how episodic digressions which impede the progress of the epic action, albeit temporarily, become a means to introduce the amatory complications more typical of romance. The poet puts a negative cast on his warriors' abdication of their martial duties, but critical as he is of their errant ways, he is not willing to forfeit the readerly pleasure that these "*errori*" provide.

To be sure, Tasso's conflicted attitude toward romance is made more manifest in his *Gerusalemme Liberata*, but it is already discernible in his poetic theory: he disparages the romance as a defective, deviant form of epic, but nonetheless allows some of its characteristic features to be part of the proper heroic poem as long as they are kept in check within the order of the artistic whole. However, I do not want to leave the impression that Tasso's accommodation of some of the delectable aspects of romance cancels out or even waters down the critique of the unfounded phantasms of romance fiction that underlies his demand for epic's historical basis and his preoccupation with what historical events it should treat. Despite the freedom he granted the poet to fill the gaps of history, he wanted what he deemed to be the truth of historical testimony to control the poet's imagination in ways in which it had never been properly regimented in the prior fantastic constructs of romance. Furthermore, he did not change his views when, after the eventual publication of his earlier set of *Discorsi* (1587, six years after the appearance of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*), he reworked and amplified them into the *Discorsi del poema eroico* (1594). By then he had read Jacopo Mazzoni's *Difesa della Comedia* (1587), a defense of Dante's poem which championed phantastic imitation and the poet's freedom to fabricate plots, unconstrained by fact or history. Tasso, quite predictably, disagreed with what he took to be Mazzoni's invitation to poets to make up falsehoods without constraint. His opposition to Mazzoni, which in the later *Discorsi* comes up in an amplified

discussion of the need for the heroic poem to be founded on a basis of historical truth, serves as an apt conclusion, and confirms how committed Tasso remained to the ideas that he had expressed in the earlier treatise:

And Mazzoni is even less right in saying that the most perfect poetry is phantastic imitation. Such imitation is of things that are not and never were, whereas the most perfect poetry imitates things that are, were, or may be, such as the Trojan war, the wrath of Achilles, Aeneas' piety, the battles of the Trojans and Latins, and other things that either happened or might have happened. But Centaurs, Harpies and Cyclops are neither an adequate nor a principal subject for poetry, nor are flying horses and the other monsters that fill the fables of romance.²⁶

Romance and history in Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata

David Quint

Tasso's theory and practice

The poetic theory of Torquato Tasso and its application in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) lay bare in a programmatic fashion the problems that romance raised for the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary system that Tasso did so much to establish. A modern form derived from the medieval stories of chivalry, romance fell outside the classical canon of literary genres, and only at the beginning of the seventeenth century would Paolo Beni attempt to assimilate the romances of chivalry with the ancient Greek novels of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius.¹ The multiple plots and heroes of romance, its improbable marvels, its open-endedness, all appeared to threaten the very possibility of form itself. In the *Discourses on the Art of Poetry* (*Discorsi dell'arte poetica*), which he composed probably around 1564 as preparation for his epic project and which were published three decades later in 1587, Tasso remarks that from the "multitude of plots is born indeterminacy; and this process can go on ad infinitum, without art circumscribing it or proposing its end."²

The particular romance Tasso had in mind was the vastly popular *Orlando Furioso* (1516) of Ludovico Ariosto. Tasso's own career was overdetermined by his rivalry with his predecessor Ariosto, while the controversy over the relative merits of the *Furioso* and the *Gerusalemme Liberata* that erupted shortly after the publication of the latter in 1581 would become the most important literary quarrel of late Renaissance culture. The preceding chapter of this volume describes some of the concerns about romance in sixteenth-century critical theory. Tasso rejected the idea, maintained by some early critics of the *Furioso*, that Ariosto's poem constituted a new modern genre, the *romanzo*, with its own rules. Rather, as others of those critics contended, the *Furioso* was simply a version of the epic or heroic poem: but in Tasso's view it was a botched job of an epic, though he also had to admit that it could be a highly enjoyable one.³ There

was nothing new, and there was to be nothing new, under the literary sun. Tasso's ostensible rejection of Ariosto's model defended a closed system of genres defined by Aristotle, notably epic and tragedy, from modern hybridization, and promoted a neoclassical taste for unified, closed literary forms. Tasso's closing off of Italian literary history from the romances of the early sixteenth century provided a model for Boileau's similar gesture in *Les Héros de Roman* of 1664–65 to close off French neoclassicism from the French literature of the earlier seventeenth century, notably from the enormously popular *Astrée* (1607–27) of Honoré d'Urfé, an interminable pastoral novel that is, in fact, another form of chivalric romance. These foreclosures of literary history corresponded to a political logic and to other denials of modernity and of the dynamism of history: to Tasso's defense of Counter-Reformation conformity versus religious innovation and difference, to Boileau's position as an Ancient in the age of Louis XIV versus pre-Enlightenment Moderns. It was not for nothing that Galileo was an enthusiastic admirer of Ariosto and a caustic critic of Tasso.⁴

Tasso's polemic against romance cannot be separated from his reflections on the relationship between poetry and history in the epic poem. The *Discourses* prescribe that the subject of the epic should be drawn from history so that the events it depicts would be at least partly true, and so that this historical basis would make the poem *believable* to the reader.⁵ The latter is Tasso's principal preoccupation: at least here, in his poetic theory, he is concerned less with the truth claims of the epic *per se* than in how they will make for an effective poetic fiction. The proper epic subject, in fact, should not be *too* historical, its events too fixed or well known, lest it inhibit the poet's invention: he rejects biblical epic such as Girolamo Vida's *Christias* (1535; 1550) and Teofilo Folengo's *L'umanità del figliuolo di Dio* (1533), and poems based on recent events such as Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria marittima* (1572) about the 1571 battle of Lepanto against the Turks. Tasso is evidently justifying his choice to write his own epic on the First Crusade, a rallying point for his fellow Christians in the wake of Lepanto, yet an enterprise that took place far enough back in time to allow poetic elaboration.⁶

But Tasso is concerned, above all, about the potential *shapelessness* of history as a subject for poetry. His rejection of romance is, in fact, joined in his poetic theory to an equal and symmetrical rejection of the model of the chronicle epic, represented in classical epic by the *Pharsalia* (*De bello civile*) of Lucan and the *Punica* of Silius Italicus, and in modern literature by the *Italia liberata dai goti* (1547–48) of Gian Giorgio Trissino, the poet of Tasso's preceding generation whose epic had proved a thunderous failure

and a kind of admonitory case. These poems were too long and too diffuse, Tasso asserted: they depicted event after historical event. Tasso compares them in length and ambition to the aimlessness of romance itself, to the sprawling poem that results when one combines together the *Orlando Furioso* and the equally long *Orlando Innamorato* of Matteo Maria Boiardo to which the *Furioso* is a sequel: too many incidents, too much material to cover.⁷

Surprising as it may initially appear, this symmetrical resemblance of chronicle epic to romance – of too much history and too much fantasy – allows us to gauge the balance that Tasso wants to strike between history and poetry. Tasso insists on the unity and therefore necessarily limited scope of the epic fiction that he is writing on the model of Homer and Virgil, who treated the wrath of Achilles rather than the whole Trojan war, the voyage of Aeneas rather than the whole history of Rome: *his* epic narrates the taking of Jerusalem rather than the whole First Crusade. He seeks to isolate the world-historical event whose meaning will be complete in itself. The task of the epic poem is to make that meaning still richer and more complete; so at the beginning of the second of the *Discourses* Tasso invokes Aristotle's distinction between history and poetry:

But because that which principally constitutes and determines the nature of poetry and makes it different from history is its consideration of matters not as they were but as they should have been, with regard rather to the universal verisimilar than to the truth of particulars, first of all the poet should take note if in the subject that he chooses to treat there is any event, which had it taken place in another fashion, might produce more delight either by being more verisimilar or more marvelous, or for any other reason.⁸

Without changing the outcome of events, the poet is allowed to change the way that they came about, to import the marvelous of a divine machinery, aggrandize the heroism of the historical actors, and moralize their deeds. Here the verisimilar or probable denotes not only that the reader accept that historical events could have happened as the poet depicts them, but that they should have happened that way. One should note how Tasso's theory somewhat surreptitiously couples and conflates the verisimilar with the Aristotelian category of the universal, and then subordinates both to the Horatian principle of producing delight.⁹ Tasso accordingly expands or condenses the historical record in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*: as Michael Murrin has pointed out, he transfers events from the crusaders' more dramatic siege of Antioch to his narrative of their taking of Jerusalem,

which was relatively straightforward; he stages the climactic battle with the army of the Egyptian caliph at Jerusalem directly after the taking of the city although that battle took place over a month later near Ascalon.¹⁰

Tasso also adds, of course, characters and incidents that improve on history. In a less commented upon vignette that immediately precedes the end of the epic (20.140–42), Goffredo, the crusader commander-in-chief and nominally the poem's chief hero, both spares and refuses a ransom from Altamoro, King of Samarkand, whom the poem, in a geographical confusion that I will suggest is deliberate, identifies as a Persian monarch (20.41). The episode imitates a passage from Ennius' *Annales* preserved in Cicero's *De officiis* (1.38) where the Greek King Pyrrhus refuses ransom and releases his Roman prisoners.¹¹ It suggests Goffredo's superiority over both of the two most important martial heroes of classical epic: Achilles, that Pyrrhus' mythical ancestor, who took ransom money from Priam for the body of Hector, and Aeneas, who refused to spare the suppliants Magus and Turnus. Pious Goffredo exhibits greater *pietas* than Aeneas, and he here distinguishes the purity of his crusader zeal from mercenary motives that will be hinted at in the mention of bloodstained booty in the next stanza. The sparing of a Persian leader, whose troops, a crusader intelligence report has earlier informed us, are among the few good fighting men among the Muslim forces (19.122.5–6), moreover establishes the possibility of a future historical alliance against the common Turkish enemy. The sixteenth-century Ottomans had, in fact, overrun a large part of the Persian kingdom, but Europeans still hoped that this second front would relieve pressure from Turkish forces in the Mediterranean and on the Danube. "The only obstacle is Persia, whose position on his rear forces the invader to take precautions. The fear of Persia gives us a respite, but it is only for a time," reported Ogier de Busbecq, the ambassador of the Habsburg emperor at Istanbul.¹² The playing off of Sunni versus Shia powers for the benefit of Western defenders of Jerusalem, it appears, is nothing new, and Tasso even pushes it four centuries back from his own time. This final episode that his poem adds to history thus not only defines the superior nature of the Christian heroism of the First Crusade by measuring it against earlier epic models; it also suggests that the events of that Crusade continue to be prophetically relevant, that they escape the historically particular to be poetically universal.

By what Jacques Derrida has described as the logic of the supplement, such poetic additions have the effect of disclosing that the supposedly complete-in-itself world-historical event is in fact in need of further completion.¹³ This was evidently the case with Tasso's own subject matter,

for the First Crusade had achieved only a shortlived success, and in 1581 Jerusalem was back in the hands of Muslim lords. One might look back at the Crusade as a utopian and exemplary moment of Christian unity; but Western Christianity was now fractured by heresy, a situation to which the *Liberata* obliquely and prophetically alludes when a lower-class mutiny against Goffredo's God-given authority spreads to the English and Swiss, the sixteenth-century Protestant adversaries of Rome. These modern schisms could not be waved away by a magic wand, but they can be so waved away in Tasso's epic. A shake of Goffredo's golden scepter – "*scote l'aurato scettro*" (8.78.4) – puts down the mutineers just as Ulysses had used the golden scepter of Agamemnon to suppress the mutinous Thersites in the *Iliad* (2.211–77). Goffredo's action prefigures the shake of a literal golden magic wand – "*scote la verga aurea*" (15.49.5) – that subsequently disperses the Circean beasts on Armida's island, a fairytale double of the earlier epic scene that might suggest its wishful thinking.¹⁴ Even the great defining acts of history – the raw material of epic – might thus seem provisional and contingent without the shaping assistance of poetry that invests them with exemplary meaning and reveals how they fit into a plot of Providence.

The "history" which Tasso's epic depicts is, then, a self-conscious poetic fiction, which makes a good story. The basis in real, "true" events makes that story verisimilar, but it is poetry that makes the events into a readable story. It does so above all, Tasso emphasized, by organizing them into a unified plot, Aristotle's beginning, middle, and end, and by avoiding what Aristotle in the *Poetics* called the episodic plot: "when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of episodes. Actions of this sort bad poets construct through their own fault."¹⁵ In the name of guaranteeing the legibility of history, Tasso justifies the introduction into the *Liberata* of a whole range of poetic inventions which I list in order of increasing irreality and remoteness from empirical history – duels, love-affairs, magicians, enchantments, flying machines, the interventions of God and of the devil. Such inventions, Tasso asserted in the *Discourses*, had been the source of pleasure for the readers of the *Orlando Furioso*, the modern *romanzo*, and he himself wished to appeal to contemporary taste.¹⁶ The reference to Ariosto begins to suggest an equation between romance and poetic fiction-making itself.

But Tasso wanted to write a modern epic that nonetheless accorded with classical unity and closed form: he insisted that the inclusion of pleasurable marvels and fictions did *not* simultaneously require the multiple, seemingly independent plots and disconnected episodes of the

romanzo – those supposed features of the *Orlando Furioso* which, Tasso wished his reader to infer, made Ariosto one of Aristotle's bad poets. Instead, the marvels could add to the single-plotted poem a pleasing *variety* within unity. But here, he acknowledged, was the real test of the poet:

for it is easy enough and requires little care to make a great variety of incidents arise from many separate actions; but that the same variety should be found in one single action [*che la stessa varietà in una sola azione si trovi*]: “*hoc opus, hic labor est.*”¹⁷

The concern here for aesthetic and formal unity corresponds not only, as critics have argued, to a Counter-Reformation impulse to religious conformity, but to the issue – perhaps closely enough related to that impulse – of the intelligibility of the epic fiction and, by extension, of the history it recounts.¹⁸ Variety, Tasso has stated shortly before, “is praiseworthy up to that point where it passes into confusion.”¹⁹ The poetic supplement that makes sense of history contains its own unsettling supplement, the imagination that spins off more inventions than the epic poem can unify: fictional characters, love-stories, marvels that take on an independent life. The reader will enjoy them for their own pleasurable sake without considering how they contribute to the larger meaning of the work, the meaning of the single historical event that they are meant to complete. Tasso's theory explores a broad question about narrative diffusion that had implicitly engaged writers in practice since the development of cyclical romance in the Middle Ages (see [Chapter 11](#)). Shortly after the publication of the *Discourses* and of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Tasso's younger English contemporary and imitator Spenser will offer his own approaches to the relation between multifaceted plots and historical understanding (see [Chapter 14](#)).

For his part, Tasso argues that too much variety will tip over into the dispersive multiplicity of romance. Romance does not simply name poetic additions to history, or stand for the poetic imagination itself in Tasso's theory, but, to return to the homology with the historical chronicle epic we have noted above, it designates an excess of narrative materials that cannot be organized into a single plot and that implicitly deny a shape or purpose to history. And sometimes not so implicitly: the animating principle of romance in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* is Fortune herself, the dispenser of one adventure after another.²⁰ In this case, the imaginative plenitude of romance, producing many, discrete stories rather than one history, would disclose the underlying contingency and anarchy of human experience.

Armida and her flying chariot

Tasso emplots, in order to overcome, this romance resistance to history in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and, as we shall see, he tellingly borrows from Boiardo's allegory when he does so. In the famous episode of the island paradise in Cantos 14–16, Tasso's two most important invented characters, the Syrian sorceress Armida and the Italian crusader knight Rinaldo, enjoy a love-tryst; both hero and heroine are subsequently reintegrated into the poem's epic narrative. The episode is literally isolated from the poem's arena of history, set outside the Pillars of Hercules in the as yet undiscovered Canary Islands. This geographical distance corresponds to the distance from reality itself of the episode's marvelous fictions: depicting Armida's magic and the counter-magic that is needed to defeat it, the *Liberata* moves self-consciously into a realm of fantasy.²¹ The Canaries are the Fortunate Isles, and they stand for the contingency of Fortune, the moment that is to be seized and enjoyed for itself, as three of Armida's surrogates – the artificial siren of Canto 14 (51–54), the bathing maidens of Canto 15 (62–64), and the singing parrot of Canto 16 (14–15) – counsel in Epicurean language. Here Tasso characterizes the pursuit of private love and pleasure by both Armida and Rinaldo as narcissistic self-absorption. In a famous tableau, much painted by baroque artists, the knights sent out to rescue Rinaldo behold Armida looking at herself in the mirror that Rinaldo holds up to her, while he sees himself mirrored in her eyes. In such timeless suspension, romance not only cuts itself off from history, but seems to come to a standstill to regard its own art for art's sake. The ensuing return of Rinaldo and of Armida behind him to the Crusade thus recovers poetry itself for the history-making purpose of epic. But Tasso's strategies to reintegrate his protagonists into the epic plot do not, in fact, make a perfect or seamless fit, and they suggest the extent to which the autonomy of romance fiction survives its supposed incorporation into epic. They also suggest the potentially open-ended nature of the history that the poem attempts to close off.

The episode of Armida's island has been much commented upon, and here I want to focus on one of its components, a romance marvel that initially marks off Armida from the epic verisimilar and from history, and that subsequently will be reincorporated with them, along with Armida herself. Her movement from her fantasy island of romance back into the world of epic is reflected symbolically in the progressive transformations of her chariot – *carro*. When first described in Canto 14 by the Magus of Ascalona, a wizard who has been converted to Christianity and who assists

the crusaders, this is a flying chariot (68) with which Armida carries Rinaldo off to the islands that take their name from Fortune (70). The vehicle recalls the flying chariot of Medea in classical mythology, and, like Medea, Armida is a sorceress. When Armida flies back to Europe on her return trip after Rinaldo has abandoned her, her chariot, surrounded by clouds and whirlwinds [*cinta di nemi e turbini sonori*] (16.71.2), additionally resembles the chariot of Elijah that ascended to heaven amid whirlwinds (*ascendit Elias per turbinem in caelum*) (4 Kings 2:11). Elijah's chariot had been featured in the *Orlando Furioso*, where St. John the Evangelist used it to transport the knight Astolfo on a heavenly ascent to the moon (*OF* 34.68–69). There Ariosto had juxtaposed the chariot with Astolfo's other flying conveyance, the hippogryph – which as the offspring of a mating of horse and gryphon that Virgil had invoked as an *adynaton*, a trope of impossibility, represented the absolute fantasy of romance invention; hippogryphs can be found in nature, Ariosto's ironic narrator comments, but only rarely (*OF* 4.18). The dream of flight may be the greatest marvel of all, and in Ariosto's irreverent fiction it threatens to collapse scriptural miracle with fabulous romance invention. Tasso's evocation of Elijah's as well as Medea's chariot behind Armida's flying machine might suggest a similar confusion.²²

Tasso, however, juxtaposes her romance marvel with two other modes of transportation to the Fortunate Islands – with the ship piloted by the allegorical personification of Fortune which carries Rinaldo's rescuers, and with the prophesied historical ships of Columbus that reached not only the Canaries but the New World of the Americas. These ships are symbolically related to one another, and both are assimilated with flight. Compared to an eagle, the ship of Fortune travels so fast that it appears to fly [*così la nave sua sembra che vole*] (15.14), while the “fortunate” sails of Columbus's ship will be spread for a famous flight [*volo*] (15.32). They are also opposed to still another vessel, the ship of Dante's Ulysses, described in stanzas 25–26 of Canto 15. Tasso follows Dante's account in *Inferno* 26 of a Ulysses who sailed beyond the pillars of Hercules without a guide and who made wings of his oars for a mad flight [*dei remi facemmo ali al folle volo*] (*Inf.* 26.125) into shipwreck and drowning. The phrase evokes the fate of Icarus in the *Aeneid* (6.19), and Tasso's variation, which portrays this voyage of Ulysses as an act of fatal daring [*il volo audace*] (15.26.2), similarly alludes to Icarus' failed flight, this time in the words of Ovid [*audaci . . . volatu*] in the *Metamorphoses* (8.223). Dante juxtaposes his Ulysses in *Inferno* 26 with the heavenly flight of Elijah in his chariot, whose horses Elisha sees rise to heaven [*al cielo erti levorsi*] (*Inf.* 26.36), and Tasso remembers the passage

when Armida lifts off to heaven [*al ciel si leva*] (16.70.8) in a chariot that resembles Elijah's, completing this complex of parallels.²³

Three modes of flightlike conveyance correspond to three genres in play in Tasso's fiction: history (Columbus), epic (the boat of Fortune), and romance (Armida's chariot) – while the failed Ulysses might be the negative version of all three. Placed between Columbus's historical ships and Armida's romance marvel, the ship of Fortune is Tasso's version of the verisimilar epic marvel: his models are the semi-magical ships of the Phaiakians in the *Odyssey*, which "move swift as thought, or as a winged creature" (7.36); one of these, running faster than "a falcon / That hawk that flies lightest of creatures" (13.86–87), carries Ulysses home after his romance wanderings.²⁴ The pilot Fortune, Boiardo's figure of pure chance and contingency, here becomes an angel, and she represents Tasso's self-conscious incorporation of romance adventure into the providential plot of the *Liberata*. She is, on the one hand, contrasted with Armida, who takes on the attributes of Boiardo's Fortune on her island in the Fortunate Islands, and, on the other, she anticipates the future providential mission of Columbus and his fortunate sails. Early on she is compared to another bird, a dove or *colomba* (15.5): she is already connected to Columbus by this pun on his name – which his son and biographer Fernando Colombo had linked to the dove of the Holy Spirit or of Noah's ark – and Tasso will reactivate the pun to reinforce the analogy between the explorer's voyage and the act of flight.²⁵ But neither Columbus nor Fortune really flies, nor does the bold flyer Ulysses. Fortune's ship may sail at supernatural speed, reaching the Canaries in four days from Palestine, but it nonetheless remains a ship, rather than a flying chariot. It represents Tasso's epic middle ground, a marvel that is still tied to the historically real and therefore, he would claim, verisimilar; the strains of the compromise nonetheless show in this labored, allegorical invention.²⁶ Armida's flying chariot, precisely because it makes no pretense to be believable, may more readily solicit the reader's suspension of disbelief.

If Armida's romance chariot is contrasted in Cantos 14–16 to these other, generically distinct vessels, the chariot itself changes generic shape through the rest of the *Liberata*. In Canto 17, Armida shows up at the encampment of the Egyptian army, compared to a reborn Phoenix (17.35), dressed as a quivered archer, in a chariot [*carro*] (17.33–34) that resembles the solar chariot and that is drawn by four unicorns. Tasso deliberately makes the nature of this chariot ambiguous – whether it is still a heavenly chariot capable of flight, with Armida less in the role of Phoebus than of his sister, the moon goddess Diana; whether these are literal unicorns and

therefore a continuation of Armida's magical arts; or whether, as seems equally likely, this is a Renaissance pageant scene and work of art, featuring horses with pasteboard horns in the guise of unicorns drawing a richly decorated car: in short, whether we are looking at another romance marvel or something more realistic, the flying chariot brought down to earth in more than one way. Armida's similarity to chaste Diana and her unicorns, too, symbols of virginity, would suggest that she has been reborn, Phoenix-like, into the virgin she has ceased to be after her tryst with Rinaldo – this may be the only joke in Tasso's poem – and ironically contrasts with the authentic spiritual rebirth that Rinaldo experiences at the beginning of the following canto (18.14–16). At the same time it hints that Armida may herself be ripe for such conversion and spiritual renewal.

By Canto 20, the transformation of Armida's golden *carro* (61) has been complete: it is now properly a war chariot or wagon set in the middle of the Egyptian army. Armida has fully entered the epic arena as a literal archeress, even if the arrows she lets fly at the Rinaldo she still loves are only half-hearted and glancing blows (20.63–65). When the crusader victory becomes clear, she flees the battlefield and attempts suicide like the historical Cleopatra (20.118) and the scorned epic Dido. Armida has throughout the poem been playing the role of these two classical heroines, both of whom Virgil describes at their ends as pale with the prospect of oncoming death (*Aeneid* 4.646; 8.709).²⁷ Armida is already tinged with the pallor of death [*già tinta in viso di pallor di morte*] (20.127.7) when Rinaldo stops her from plunging an arrow into her breast.

For if Armida's chariot maps her reabsorption into epic history, she is, at the same time, to be saved from the fate of Virgil's Dido, the heroine who offers a romance alternative to Aeneas and who is cast aside and left to destroy herself when the epic and its hero move on to a higher historical destiny. Tasso has, in fact, glanced at that fate in the episodes of the enchanted woods. When Tancredi visits the phantom Clorinda in these woods in Canto 13, they seem to be modelled on Dante's wood of suicides in *Inferno* 13; when Rinaldo visits a phantom Armida there in Canto 18, their myrtle grove resembles the *campi lugentes* of the underworld of *Aeneid* 6 (440f.), where Aeneas sees Dido among the victims of love. Tasso casts the impossibility of reconciling romance to epic as itself a demonic illusion and instead reunites Rinaldo and Armida at his epic's end.

The *Liberata* otherwise prepares the reader for the moment when Armida surrenders herself into her beloved Rinaldo's arms and echoes the words – "*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" – of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1:38).

*"Ecco l'ancilla tua: d'essa a tuo senno
 dispon," gli disse "e le fia legge il cenno."
 (20.136.7–8)*

"Here is your handmaiden: do with her as your reason sees fit, and your bidding will be her law." The action of the epic begins with the descent of the angel Gabriel (1.13), the same Gabriel who brought the good news to Mary, who here appoints Goffredo captain of the crusader army (1.16). Goffredo's office, spelled out by Peter the Hermit, is to impose laws according to his reason [*Imponga a i vinti legge egli a suo senno*], while the other knights, formerly his equals, are to be ministers at his bidding [*ubbidienti al cenno*] (1.33.3–5). Armida's repetition of the rhyme words *senno/cenno* places her in this same hierarchy and chain of command. The poem, in fact, suggests how the experience of love and erotic subjection has caused both of these self-centered teenagers, Rinaldo and Armida, to recognize their dependence on others. Rinaldo, who glories in his servitude to Armida (16.21.1), is readied to submit once again to the authority of Goffredo, just as Armida, who had earlier pleaded to be his "*ancella*" and "*serva*" if he would only take her with him back to the crusader camp (16.48–49), will finally be given the opportunity to give up her scorned pride and to make herself Rinaldo's handmaiden in a higher sense.²⁸ Their sunny vacation in the Canaries now turns out not to have been an isolated romance episode, but integral to their growing up and character development – and thus to the poem's epic goal. That goal and meaning seem to be less the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, the very last image of the *Liberata*, as much as the establishment of unity in the crusader camp, Goffredo's regathering of his "*compagni erranti*" announced in its first stanza and an image of the unity of Christendom. Submission to authority in the name of unity: a Tridentine moral that makes the world-historical event of the Crusade cohere and makes it cohere with the rest of history as well. And that united camp, as Riccardo Bruscaagli has pointed out, is an image of the unified body of the poem itself, each of whose parts now fits together, transformed from potential romance digression into epic building block.²⁹

Not so fast. Tasso's first hostile critic, Lionardo Salviati, writing under the academic name of *L'infarinato*, objected precisely that Tasso had not woven together all the strands of the poem by reconciling Rinaldo and Armida, but had instead introduced a new and unfinished plot just as his epic was ending:

the action being finished, Rinaldo starts up again with that Armida, without it ever being talked about again, begun at the end of the book, and that

episode is left unfinished [*fnita già l'azione, si rappicchì di nuovo Rinaldo con quella Armida, e senza mai più parlarne, incominciato nel fin del libro, e imperfetto si lasci quell'episodio*]; and if there are some unfinished episodes in the *Furioso*, it is no great matter if in the middle of the book, and in such a vast fabric, a thread has escaped: a thread moreover of little or no importance, compared to the Rinaldo of the *Goffredo* [i.e., *Gerusalemme Liberata*], who is the principal hero.³⁰

What Salviati objects to is the extent to which the reuniting of Rinaldo and Armida leaves unanswered questions about their future. Goffredo's worshipping at the empty tomb of the Holy Sepulchre at the poem's end fulfills his vow, points to his own historical death in the following year, and looks to an ending beyond the grave. It is possible that Armida's words indicate her readiness to convert to Christianity, an analogous death of the self, but Tasso leaves the question open. Rinaldo meanwhile promises to be Armida's champion and servant (20.134) – as she promises to be his handmaiden – and to restore her to her throne, remembering the vow that he had made (20.122; 16.54) when he left her and that still remains to be fulfilled. But there are several problems with this ending. It is unclear whether Rinaldo is still in love with Armida as she is with him: he weeps with pity for her, but it is chaste pity (20.134), and he may be only doing his duty in his championing of her cause.³¹ That cause, furthermore, does not exist: Armida's story of having been driven from her father's throne was a phony damsel-in-distress charade that she used in Canto 4 to seduce away the crusaders who were smitten with her. Both of these characters have some explaining to do to the other.

Salviati pointedly contrasts this loose thread that would unravel the ending of the *Liberata* with those in the *Orlando Furioso*, the poem that he favors over Tasso's epic. He appears to have one unfinished plotline particularly in mind: the story of Angelica and Medoro, who, once they are married, have no further business in the poem except to escape ignominiously from the crazed Orlando whom their marriage, and his sense of betrayal by Angelica, have driven mad. Ariosto dismisses them from the poem, sending them back east where Angelica will reward the lowly Medoro with the scepter of India. He famously invites other poets to sing about them [*forse altri canterà con miglior plettro*] (*OF* 29.16.8), an ironic enough offer since there is nothing to write about characters who live happily ever after. The invitation, nevertheless, was accepted, and by the century's end there were three Italian and two Spanish sequels to the *Furioso* taking off from this unfinished story near its middle.³² Some similar sequel, Salviati was pointing out, seemed to be called for in the

case of the *Liberata*, and in a way that was much more damaging to that poem's sense of closure. Tasso's Rinaldo seems to be embarked on a new romance adventure just as the rest of the epic is finishing up, and the uncertainty leaves the *Liberata*, or at least part of it, open-ended.

Sure enough, sequels *were* composed to tie up the story of Rinaldo and Armida and the secondary love story of Tancredi and Erminia that seemed equally unresolved.³³ Camillo Camilli attached his *Cinque canti* to the *Liberata* in 1583, only two years after Tasso's epic first appeared.³⁴ This poem too had an Ariostan precedent, for Ariosto had composed a fragmentary *Cinque canti*, an intended sequel to the *Furioso*, that was only published twelve years after the poet's death in 1545. Camilli was thoroughly unimaginative in solving the problem of what to do with Armida. He has her commit suicide at the false news of Rinaldo's death (3.95f.), in a lengthy imitation of the suicide of Virgil's Dido: this, as we have seen, was precisely the solution that Tasso doubly rejected. Armida's death leaves the field for Rinaldo's affections open to a character whom Camilli invents: Idetta, a woman warrior modelled on Ariosto's Bradamante, who is the sister of Goffredo and the twin of his brother Eustazio, a better, Christian marriage choice for Rinaldo (and in line with the divine prophecy to Goffredo – *Gerusalemme Liberata* 14.19 – that Rinaldo's Este lineage would be joined to his own).

Camilli understood, however, that to reopen Tasso's narrative meant to turn toward romance, and he was a good enough reader of the *Liberata* to know just what kind of generic machinery was needed. When Erminia asks her how to capture Tancredi's love, Armida tells her that she won't have to fight enemy troops like an epic hero, but just sit back and enjoy the flight: "*Non d'affrontar nemiche armate sc[hi]ere, / Ma d'alzarti ne l'aria al par de i venti*" (2.54). With the aid of demons, Armida dusts off the magic chariot (2.87–88) that Tasso had put to rest, and rides in it once again. The flying chariot is the emblem of romance at an extreme remove from the historical and verisimilar; it seems hard to distinguish from the wings of poetry itself, attributed to soaring Tasso, the "true Daedalus" [*Dedalo vero*] in Camilli's dedicatory stanzas.

The unfinished reconciliation of Rinaldo and Armida in the *Liberata* that appeared to Salviati as a fault and to Camilli as an opportunity is, of course, a deliberate choice on Tasso's part, though it was one that he professed to be unsure about in the *Poetic Letters* he exchanged with a circle of his friends and chosen critics before the appearance of the *Liberata*.³⁵ He would eliminate the reconciliation of the lovers in the *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, the revised and very different epic he would publish in 1593; by

then, Armida's chariot had disappeared from the poem as well. The *Liberata* effectively ends twice: its epic ending with Goffredo's prayer at the Holy Sepulchre, its romance ending with the reuniting of Rinaldo and Armida that also seems to extend the poem's story outside its epic bounds. The doubling of the plot strands in itself suggests that romance survives the drive of the epic to poetic unity and singleness of purpose. Rinaldo and Armida are of course the poem's fictional characters; having served their purpose in furthering and giving significance to the historical plot of the Crusade, they are now free, once Jerusalem has been delivered to Goffredo, to pursue their own ends. Tasso, that is, *both* connects their romance story to the epic goals of his poem *and* grants the story its own independent, continuing existence, though that may be in another poem altogether, perhaps in another genre that Tasso officially refuses to recognize – "*forse altri canterà con miglior plettro.*" Tasso's choice suggests that, at one level, his project to subordinate romance to epic unity has all along been an alibi to keep romance alive, to vindicate the ultimate autonomy of the poetic imagination in relationship to the history it has been called upon to supplement. The romance sequel or supplement also implies the existence of further plots, private stories, even alternate histories that challenge the primacy and meaning of the epic world-historical event. The contingency of romance speaks to a larger open-endedness in history itself. Tasso may have set himself up as an Ancient, but his defense of poetry inevitably placed him in the camp of the Moderns.

*The thinking of history in Spenserian romance**Gordon Teskey*

The word *history* contains a notorious but also, as is generally supposed, an inconsequential ambiguity in respect of its subjective and objective meanings. On the one hand, *history* means events in the past, the *res gestae*, the things that were done. These are the objects of historical study, which are set apart from us by distance in time. On the other hand, *history* means just this historical study and, based on such study, the narrative of things done in the past, the *historia rerum gestarum*. From the present moment of its own writing, a historical narrative opens a subjective view on its objects of study, which objects are thence qualified by it as *historical*.¹

But is the ambiguity of the word *history* a serious issue in the practice of history? We readily suppose the truth of facts and the art of their telling are separable things, that when we use the word *history* we have only to specify which of the word's two senses we mean: a subjective discipline, unfolding in a narrative written in the present, or objective events in the past. When, however, we begin to reflect on this past – to picture it – we discover it survives only in incomplete records and indistinct traces, in memory, documents, and waste – what Edmund Spenser called “memorials” or *moniments*. We discover, moreover, that this past can be brought to life as the sequential development we think of as “history” only through the literary mediation of narrative. It has been held for some time, although not without controversy, that there can be no purely objective historical study apart from our subjective deployment of principles inherent to narrative. Even so, it seems reasonable to suppose that, once we have allowed for the inevitable distortions of narrative, proper standards of historiographical rigor can be brought into force once again; at which point the ambiguity of the word *history* will be of no further interest.

Hegel thought otherwise. He claimed that the ambiguity in the word *history* reflects a deep truth about the discipline of historical study and about the nature of history itself. For Hegel, there can be no historical events without the writing of them as historical events, for the events – if

they are to be more than mere occurrences – are constituted as historical by the action of thinking about them historically and even, more strangely, by a kind of thinking that goes on within them. That is why Hegel said that Africa has no history: in his view events there do not exhibit self-conscious development in time but are “still involved in the conditions of mere nature.” There can thus be no history apart from the study of history, wherein subject and object are entangled with each other: “We must consider this coincidence of the two meanings [of *history*] as of a higher kind than a merely external accident,” says Hegel; “it should thus be maintained that historiography appears simultaneously with properly historical acts and events: there is an inner, common matrix [or “foundation,” *Grundlage*] driving them forward.”²

An inner, common matrix driving them forward? What foundation underlies both the historical events of the past and our historiographical view of the events of the past? This is to claim much more than that historical writing and historical consciousness constitute past events as historical. The answer, as it happens, and as we might expect from a *philosopher* of history, is a “reason-principle” or “spirit” that is properly the concern of philosophy, specifically the Hegelian philosophy of truth as a development in time wherein events are taken hold of by concepts and turned into those concepts’ expressions. Truth in the Hegelian system does not transcend history but is working through history from within. In the section of the *Logic* entitled “On the Concept [*Begriff*] in General,” Hegel says, “Philosophy should not be merely a narrative of what has occurred [*keine Erzählung dessen was geschieht*] but rather a knowledge of that which is *true* in what has occurred. Philosophy should comprehend [or “grasp,” *begreifen*] what in narrative appears as mere occurrence [*was in der Erzählung als ein blosses Geschehen erscheint*].”³ It is by the grasping and manipulative action of thought that historical study becomes phenomenological science, giving knowledge of what is real and true in the past. Even so, this reality is fulfilled not in the past but in us, when we apprehend the conceptual truth – let us just say, the “thought” – that is adumbrated by events in the past. So, Hegel.

But when we are speaking of poetry, or of creative work in general, including poetic romance, we need better terms than the philosophical ones, *subject* and *object*, or at least different ones. We do if we are to see how a poet such as Edmund Spenser can develop in narrative romance an immanent thinking of history that is comparable to the thought-work – that conceptual grasping from within – which Hegel sees taking place in history. We might replace *subject*, for example, with *poiesis*, the work of

making or fashioning: production according to knowledge. Where the philosophical subject views the world of objects from a distance and is not directly involved with them, the creative artist reaches out to the world to change it with work. We see in this development the beginning of that union of subject and object in thinking that is shadowy and elusive in Hegel. As to the term *object*, we might replace it with “the other,” *to allo*. Something other within the work of art – a living, narrative voice, a speaking face, a heterocosm or fictional world, a hidden meaning – is other with respect to this work’s production, its *poiesis*, and yet is entangled with this very production. Poetry and history seem to generate from within a presence that is strangely other than themselves, a moment of heterogeneity that cannot be located anywhere outside them, although it has to do with this outside.

Not all poetry is ambitious to grapple with the problem of history, but the three greatest poets of the English Renaissance – Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton – are intensely preoccupied with the phenomenon of history: Milton, the most ideological of the three, with the direction of history as determined by God; Shakespeare, the most worldly of the three, with the forces of history as determined by struggle; and Spenser, more primordially, with what it feels like to live in history at the present time. Spenser is concerned with the coming-into-appearance of the historical as such and of the consciousness of living in history.⁴ Milton and Shakespeare are so fundamentally astounded by this phenomenon, by this coming-into-appearance of the historical past, that they gaze upon it as upon the face of Medusa, transfixed by a past that is set apart from them by distance in time. That is why Shakespeare brought this past into the *theatre*, the place of “looking” and of *theoria*, and that is why *Paradise Lost* was initially conceived as a theatrical production. For Milton, the historical past is a single phenomenon unfolding from an origin, with providence as its guide and Milton himself as its observing subject, eliminating, or rendering transparent, every moment in the historical past between him and the moment presently selected for observation. For Shakespeare, the historical past is a series of phenomenal events with consequences known to us, that is, to the audience, but entirely unpredictable by the historical actors – the perfect situation for dramatic irony, and for a tragic view of history. It is not just distance in time but this ironic difference between the imperfect knowledge of the actors of history and the knowledge of the audience observing them that makes the actors of history into ironic objects. And this irony also makes us into subjects.

It would appear to be just this distinction between the subjective and objective meanings of *history* that Spenser uses romance to obscure, to the great enrichment of his thinking about history. Spenser's sense of the past is altogether different from Shakespeare's and Milton's because he does not set the past at a theatrical distance but entangles past and present in the signifying procedures of allegory and in the randomizing patterns of narrative romance. Just because romance effects what Jon Whitman, speaking of the rise of twelfth-century romance from the heroic cultures of the earlier Middle Ages, calls an "introspective turn" away from large historical scenes, it proves to be useful for the thinking of history. For that introspective turn, combined with the multiple interconnections of interlace narrative, develops narrative itself as "a way of thinking."⁵ Through this introspective turn romance enlivens the subjective side of the historical relation to the past, providing the circumstances within which to reflect upon the moral truths that can be found in the past by rendering more flexible and various our sense of moral truth in ourselves.

The fear of romance (as compared with epic, or allegory) as a contaminant in the search for historical truth is therefore relevant when we consider how, in his late sixteenth-century *Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser uses romance actually to think about history.⁶ I am not so much concerned here with how Spenser uses romance allegorically to *reflect* or, in the terms he employs in the "Letter to Raleigh," to "shadow" the historical events of his own day or of the English past, although he does so on numerous occasions.⁷ I am concerned instead with how Spenser has begun to think of the experience of all such events as historical, rather than as purely religious, political, genealogical, or moral. For a Renaissance author to think of the events of his own day as historical events, and to think of the consciousness of those events as historical consciousness, is to experience them as ungrounded in any secure moral principle or in any metaphysical truth, even if the search for such principles and truths can never be relinquished.

What I find striking about Spenser's thinking is the way his opening thoughts do not govern the thoughts that come later. Spenser is a remarkably intuitive, experimental, and non-teleological thinker who allows the materials with which he works to undermine his early formulations and to lead him into newer and deeper ones. He is in this respect an *archaeological* thinker, rather than, like Milton, a thinker of the *archê*. When Milton looks into the deepest past, no historical events are interposed between the first parents and him which would obstruct his vision of the origin of history. As contemplated objects, Adam and Eve are separated from

Milton by an empty, transparent distance across time, as is every subsequent historical event Milton contemplates. But for Spenser, past events are present to him in their materials for rearranging into moral significance. That is why reading *The Faerie Queene* feels like thinking. It feels as if we are collaborating with the poet in thinking through the problems he so tentatively raises and so creatively explores – as in a sense we are.

It may be supposed that of the three literary genres that converge in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* – allegory, epic, and romance – romance is the least suitable for thinking about history, and in particular about the momentous occurrences in Tudor times, and the still more momentous threatened occurrences, from the break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England under Henry VIII to the brutal, Catholic reaction under Mary and Philip – and on to the turbulent but relatively stable reign of Queen Elizabeth, with its doomed attempt at a compromise in religion (radical in theology, conservative in ritual), its rebellions, assassination attempts, high-profile executions, Irish uprisings, colonial adventures, and naval explorations. Through it all was the ever-present threat of authoritarian, Roman Catholic, inquisitorial Spain, with its immense wealth from Mexico and, as Spenser calls it, “Indian *Peru*” (II proem ii), and its possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific coast of South America. Spain's power was the first to be truly global in its reach – Philip II was the first monarch ever to rule an empire on which, as was said at the time, the sun never set – and the English challenge to that power was in Spenser's eyes, as in his friend Sir Walter Raleigh's, heroic, but undependable and chronically underfunded. England was threatened not only globally but also nearer home. Draw a circle through the lands surrounding England and you see it: Ireland, Scotland, the Low Countries, France, and of course Spain, with the Azores, were in varying degrees under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, declared her a heretic, formally released her subjects from their allegiance to her, and funded attempts on her life. This was a huge political mistake, consolidating the English behind their Queen and ensuring the more severe persecution of Roman Catholics to follow.⁸

In the decade following 1588, the year of the Armada, when Spenser was writing *The Faerie Queene*, England's situation was felt to be as perilous – I would say more perilous – than that of the western democracies during the Cold War. It was closer to the situation of England between 1939 and 1942, when invasion followed by bloody proscription was imminent. In

these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Spenser's poem is an intensely engaged meditation on history, under the pressure of historical events unfolding in his own day, when his country seemed to stand on the brink of disaster and even of annihilation.

Spenser does use elements of the Virgilian, dynastic epic to understand the events of his day in historical terms, notably when the Briton princess, Britomart, visits the cave of the wizard Merlin, who delivers himself of a prophecy concerning her issue. The passage offers some perspectives on long-standing questions about how epic relates to romance and how literary genealogies serve political policies.⁹ Spenser bases the episode with Merlin on the prophecy of Anchises, in *Aeneid* 6, foretelling the rise of the Julian house from the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia and the universal peace to be achieved under Augustus. Merlin tells Britomart that the love that she feels for Artegal, whom she has seen in a magic mirror, and that "with sharpe fits [her] tender heart oppresseth sore," should not dismay her:

For so must all things excellent begin,
And eke enrooted deepe must be that Tree,
Whose big embodied braunches shall not lin,
Till they to heavens hight forth stretched bee.
For from thy wombe a famous Progenee
Shall spring, out of the auncient *Troian* blood,
Which shall revive the sleeping memoree
Of those same antique Peres, the heavens brood,
Which *Greek* and *Asian* rivers stayned with their blood.

Renowned kings, and sacred Emperours,
Thy fruitfull Ofspring, shall from thee descend;
Brave Captains, and most mighty warriours,
That shall their conquests through all lands extend,
And their decayed kingdoms shall amend:
The feeble Britons, broken with long warre,
They shall upreare, and mightily defend
Against their forren foe, that comes from farre,
Till universall peace compound all civill iarre.

(*The Faerie Queene* III.iii.22–23)

After a long history of the Britons with many vicissitudes, the ancient spark of "Briton blood" (III.iii.48) is freshly kindled on the isle of *Mona* (Anglesey), where – although this is not explicitly stated – Henry Tudor, Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, was born. In the final stanza of the prophecy Britomart is told, first, of universal peace between the warring nations on British soil, meaning the subjugation of Ireland and Scotland

and the end of the Wars of the Roses. She is then told of the “royall virgin” – Queen Elizabeth, of course – who will extend the white rod of her power over Belgium, that is, over the Low Countries, including the Netherlands, in which English troops were then aiding, although but faintly, the Protestant Dutch against the Spanish. (It was from the Netherlands, in the Armada year, that the main invasion force under the Duke of Parma was to come.) The royal virgin will then, with the same rod, smite “the great Castle,” that is, the Spanish House of Castile, causing it to fall. What form this blow will take has been left deliberately unclear, but it falls in with the hopes of those at Elizabeth’s court who were militating for direct confrontation with Spanish power even on the Iberian mainland, a most impracticable idea, which Elizabeth was too wise (and too frugal) to undertake. The brilliant Cadiz expedition of 1596, commanded by Essex, Howard, Vere, and Raleigh, had no valid military justification, although it did return with the books that would be the foundation of the collection of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The expedition to the Azores the following year was disastrous. Both these adventures were sops thrown to the war party and justified Elizabeth’s and her counselors’ defensive and conservative stance. Queen Elizabeth didn’t like war because it is expensive, and men run it. Here is Spenser’s imaginative realization of the hopes of these men:

Thenceforth eternall union shall be made
 Betweene the nations different afore,
 And sacred Peace shall lovingly persuade
 The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
 And civile armes to exercise no more:
 Then shall a royall virgin raine, which shall
 Stretch her white rod ouer the *Belgicke* shore,
 And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
 That it shall make him shake, and shortly learne to fall.

(*The Faerie Queene* III.iii.49)

This is thrilling but quite unrealistic. In the end, the triumphal formulae of the Virgilian, dynastic epic can offer little more than an ideological fantasy. It is a fantasy of total victory and moral certainty, and of the achievement of universal peace at home and abroad. This fantasy is based, according to the form of the dynastic epic, on a genealogy that is largely imaginary (the Tudors were brilliant newcomers, not ancient descendants of Arthur) and a quite unreal assessment of Elizabeth’s power. In short, the dynastic epic, despite its passionate concern with history, is inadequate to the thinking of history.¹⁰

As to allegory, especially in its more idealist, cosmographic forms, it is far better suited to reflection on moral concerns in the individual than it is to the thinking of history. Examples to the contrary may be cited: the historical allegory at the end of Dante's *Commedia* and the politico-historical reflections in *Piers Plowman*. But, on the whole, allegory is a literary form that denies full reality to history and can engage history only, as in the examples mentioned, when it mixes with other forms, which is something that allegory does very easily. That is what happens in *The Faerie Queene*: allegory works together with romance (far more than with the less plastic form of the epic) to accomplish the thinking of history.

In the romance narrative of the first book of *The Faerie Queene* historical allusions to contemporary political circumstances in England are generally not as explicit as they are in the prophecy of Merlin. But for that reason the romance narrative is better suited to the thinking of history in a manner that does not degenerate into ideological wish-fulfillment. The blending or the entanglement of allegory with romance renders the allegory less exactly idealistic, more flexible, and more capable of producing the unexpected. We see this especially in the rich episode of the House of Pride. The House of Pride is the allegorical-romantic version of the "Castle" in Merlin's prophecy that the royal virgin, merely by smiting it with her rod, will cause to fall.

It doesn't fall in this episode. The House of Pride is a ruin that is forever falling but never definitively falls, this being in itself an important thought about history. (The matter is exemplified in Gibbon: it becomes hard to find a fall in the midst of decline.) Moreover, the Redcross Knight, who in the historical allegory is Saint George, the patron saint of England, is implicated in the sinfulness of the House of Pride and barely escapes with his life. The rapacity of Castilian imperialism, which Spenser has the wisdom to see is driven not by greed alone, but, more deeply, by pride, is a moral peril in which the English nation also stands, even as it heroically challenges that pride.

When the Redcross Knight, accompanied by the witch *Duessa*, who calls herself *Fidessa* ("little faith"), comes to the magnificent House of Pride, we are meant to think of the arrogant House of Castile. A great house should be founded securely on the rock of faith, not on the shifting foundation of wealth recently acquired from the pillaging of gold and silver from the peoples of the New World. In Spenser's day, wealth based on money rather than on land was regarded as unstable in itself and the cause of instability elsewhere, as indeed it was: the influx of gold and silver from the New World initiated a cycle of unprecedented inflation in Europe and as

far away as China. The “stately Pallace” of the House of Pride has “loftie towers,” like Philip II of Spain’s royal palace, the Escorial, but its beauty depends on its being surfaced with a covering of gold foil, which, like liquid assets, will soon fall away, exposing the corruption beneath:

It was a goodly heape for to behould,
 And spake the praises of the workmans wit;
 But full great pittie, that so faire a moulde
 Did on so weake foundation ever sitt:
 For on a sandie hill, that still did flitt,
 And fall away, it mounted was full hie,
 That every breath of heaven shook itt:
 And all the hinder parts, that few could spie,
 Were ruinous and old, but painted cunningly.
 (*The Faerie Queene* 1.iv.5)

Even those “hinder parts,” which signify the truth to which we come only after painstaking experience and reflection, are “painted cunningly” to conceal what they are. Entering into the House with the crowd, the Redcross Knight sees the magnificent chatelaine, *Lucifera*, and observes the procession of the seven deadly sins. There he is challenged by the enraged Saracen knight, *Sans Joy*, or melancholic violence, a suitable person to encounter in this home of Spanish pride. Redcross is challenged because he holds the shield of *Sans Joy*’s brother, *Sans Foy* (“without faith”), whom he slew. (Like *Sans Loy*, these two Saracen knights are sons of *Aueugle*, or “blindness.”) In the knightly contest that ensues, Redcross eventually gets the better of his foe and is about to deliver the *coup de grâce* when the witch *Duessa* wraps *Sans Joy* in a cloud. When night comes, she carries him to the underworld, to be healed by *Aesculapius*.

As Redcross recovers from his own wounds received in the battle, he is warned to flee: “For on a day his wary Dwarfe had spide, / Where in a dungeon deepe huge nombers lay / Of caytive wretched thralls, that wayled night and day” (1.v.45). The moral allegory teaches us that the wretches have been confined there, as we should expect, for covetousness, “wastfull Pride, and wanton Riotise” (stanza 46), but we are startled to learn that the prisoners are not ordinary people who have committed these sins: they are the great conquerors of history. Somewhat in the manner of a cubist collage, they are incongruously applied to the surface of the tale. We see Nimrod, Croesus, Antiochus, Alexander, and Caesar, all crammed together in the dungeon of the House of Pride. I take up the list at

Alexander, the far-reaching ruler repeatedly portrayed in medieval romance (see [Chapters 2](#) and [6](#) of this volume):

... There also was that mighty Monarch layd
Low under all, yet above all in pride,
That name of native syre did fowle upbrayd,
And would as *Ammons* son be magnified,
Till scorned of God and man a shamefull death he dide.

All these together in one heape were throwne,
Like carkases of beastes in butchers stall.
And in another corner wide were strowne
The antique ruines of the *Romanes* fall:
Great *Romulus*, the Grandsyre of them all,
Proud *Tarquin*, and too lordly *Lentulus*,
Stout *Scipio*, and stubborn *Hanniball*,
Ambitious *Sylla*, and sterne *Marius*,
High *Caesar*, great *Pompey*, and fierce *Antonius*.
(*The Faerie Queene* I.v.48–49)

The very compression to which the conquerors' bodies are subjected (even Hannibal is thrown in with the Romans) has squeezed out the historical time that once kept them apart – Alexander in the third, Caesar in the first century BC. The romance of *The Faerie Queene* brings them together – incongruously, as I said, with respect to historical time, but also with respect to decorum – entangling them in poetic thinking.

Spenser's poem thus thinks the phenomenon of the historical as it comes into appearance in the present time of his narrative as the material remains of the past. Unexpectedly, the historical flows from the past into the present. Or, as I shall have occasion to say again, the historical "ruins" or "collapses" into the present and is there all around the poet as well as underneath him, to be excavated and meddled with now. The past is for him like an archaeological site, or a "tell," a heap of crushed cities in strata under a hill, into which the poet can delve. The House of Pride turns out to be an earth house of this kind, the ruin of many civilizations, not of one. It will shortly be seen under the image of something that is still more disturbing than a heap of crushed cities: a heap of dead bodies.

By employing the conventions and stock situations of romance narrative – in this instance, of a knight escaping from a perilous castle that seemed welcoming at first – Spenser leaves us with a devastating final image of the historical past. The Redcross Knight rises painfully from his bed and escapes by a "privie Posterne" (I.v.52) at the back of the House of Pride. He must struggle, however, to make his way – "Scarse could he

footing find” – through a killing field of rotting corpses extending behind the House of Pride, beside which more corpses have been raked into a heap: “A donghill of dead carkases he spide, / The dreadfull spectacle of that sad house of *Pride*” (I.v.53). Spenser is reminding us that the great conquerors, whom we have learned to picture to ourselves in some glorious way – for example, as heroically mounted on a rearing steed, pointing the way to the future – must come at last to such a “shamefull end,” in abject corporeality. As for Spenser’s heap of conquerors, in the final image of them as heaped bodies they are not mentioned as conquerors because it is impossible to tell them apart. We recognize with a start that the opening verse of the description of the House of Pride has told us what the analysis of it will lead to: “It was a goodly heape for to behould.”

As for the ruin, so important in Spenser’s imagination as an image of the past, it is the architectural counterpart to the heap of dead bodies. For Shakespeare, the defining truth of the historical past – from Richard of York to Caesar, Macbeth, Coriolanus, and Prospero – is the struggle for power. For Milton, the defining image of the past is the paradisaical garden at the beginning and the end of history, the place from which we fell and to which we will return. But for Spenser, the defining image of the past is the ruin as it is ruining now, collapsing over our heads into the future.¹¹ The ruin belongs both to the objectivity of the past as the past and to the subjective view of the material remains of that past as it is now.

It should always be remembered that Spenser translated Du Bellay’s *antiquitez* as “ruins,” in which he heard a reference not just to the substantive, *ruins*, as of fallen buildings, but to the verb *ruere*, “to collapse, to rush violently downwards.” For Spenser, a historical moment of the past (for example, the moment, and it was a long one, of ancient Rome) is not set apart from us at a fixed distance in time, but belongs to a continuous present, one that is forever collapsing into the future, as Troy collapses into Rome and Rome into Spenser’s Troynovant: “For noble *Britons* sprong from *Troians* bold, / And *Troynovant* was built of old *Troyes* ashes cold” (III.ix.38). It is significant that the nations of Europe conceived of themselves as rising Phoenix-like from the ashes of Troy, and the connection between the event of ruin and what Eugène Vinaver called “the rise of romance,”¹² specifically of Arthurian romance, is explicit in the opening stanza of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and in the distributed Trojan narrative of *The Faerie Queene* (II.x.5–69; III.iii.21–50; III.ix.33–51). That is how ruined Troy, Spenser’s favorite image of history, enters into the present time of his narrative, collapsing from its highest point, literalizing the words of Virgil: “ruit alto a culmine Troia.”¹³ For Spenser, the task is to

make poetry of ruins in such a way as to allow the pastness of the past to arise in the present.

Spenser's experience of history is thus phenomenological in the sense that he brings contemporary events into appearance as historical events, engaging with them not as an observing subject but as a poet who creates from within them. Spenser thinks more fundamentally about history than Milton does just because he is concerned with how the historical is revealed to us before he is concerned with the objective contents of this revelation. History thus becomes a moment of heterogeneity that arises in present experience and belongs as much to this experience as it does to the past. That is the more technical way of saying that Spenser is concerned with what it feels like to live not in nature primarily, but in history.

When I say that Spenser is concerned with what it feels like to live in history I am simplifying drastically the complex engagement with history that is *The Faerie Queene*. *The Faerie Queene* is an allegorical epic employing the narrative forms of romance. Spenser planned *The Faerie Queene* to have twelve books, each of which would take up one of the twelve private moral virtues "as Aristotle hath devised" – so Spenser says in the "Letter to Raleigh."¹⁴ The action of each book was to begin at the court of the Fairy Queen, Gloriana, where the knights who are to serve as the "patrons" of the virtues are employed on their several quests to confront the monsters representing the opposites of those virtues. As the knights move outward from Fairy Court, a counter-movement is opened in the narrative. The young prince Arthur, having seen the Fairy Queen in a vision, has gone in search of her in Fairy Land, entering, as it were, from the periphery. As he moves towards her capital, Cleopolis, Arthur encounters each of the knightly patrons of the virtues in turn, giving indispensable aid at a moment when the knight is overcome by some peril to which the virtue he sponsors is inadequate because it is less than the whole – "magnificence," which is "the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all."¹⁵

Although Spenser projected a second series of twelve books on the public virtues, he in fact completed only six books and a part of the seventh. There are, moreover, within the poem as we have it, a great number of deviations from the original plan, the chief of them being the transposition of symbolic values associated with Arthur and Gloriana onto Artegal ("Arthur's equal," and the knight of Justice) and the Briton princess (note that she is not a fairy), Britomart, the martial maid and patroness of Chastity. This transposition is achieved by the drift and complication typical of narrative romance, and the purpose of the

transposition is to introduce history, British history, into the scheme of the whole. It may be possible in narrative romance to think each of the virtues more or less head-on, in the manner Spenser describes, assigning one knight and one narrative to each, and interweaving those smaller narratives with a larger one in which is “sette forth,” as Spenser says, the virtue that contains them all. But for history to enter as matter for thought, it is necessary to exploit what I have referred to as a tendency in narrative romance to drift and complication. Spenser gives his own turn to the complexities of interlace that had developed from the medieval to the early modern period (see [Chapters 11 and 13](#) of this volume). At some thirty-five thousand lines (34,964, including verse canto-headings and the three canceled stanzas), the still fragmentary *Faerie Queene* is a vast, speculative project in which Spenser’s ideas are continually changing as he writes. His writing is itself thinking. In the course of this work, Spenser discovered the appearance of history as something that is happening now. He also discovered, as I remarked earlier, the sense of ungroundedness that accompanies this appearance.

Three things may be concluded about this new phenomenon that Spenser discovered as he wrote *The Faerie Queene*. They concern contingency, agency, and the dialectic of ethical reflection and political engagement. As to the first, I mean that the experience, new to the Renaissance, of being in history is an experience of ungroundedness that is unlike the experience of being in the hands of God or even of one’s temporal lord. The second thing to be said about the phenomenon Spenser discovered is in counterpoint with the first: it is that history is partly artificial, being something we make, and to the extent that we make history we shape contingency to our own ends. Our destiny is to some extent in our own hands; otherwise, history would never call forth any effort from us and would never have the character of an idea. But how much is represented by that *some* is, of course, uncertain: the devil is in it. Utopian thinking, that humanist creation of the Renaissance, attempts to make a whole truth out of the partial truth that history is something we make. But because history is different from artifacts in being largely out of our control, that is, in being subject to contingency and to epochal determination, history opens us – and this is the third point I wish to make – to the not entirely harmonious responsibilities of ethical reflection and political commitment. History can do so because it is partly artificial. We should recall Jakob Burckhardt’s profound insight that the defining event of the Renaissance was the conception of the state – that instrument of historical agency, that thing we make, and which makes us in turn – as a work of art. It is out of the

unpredictable events that engulf us in history that the positive energies of ethical reflection and political commitment emerge.

I said that these things, ethical reflection and political commitment, are not harmonious with each other, and that too may be something Spenser discovered. Ethical reflection works against commitment because the detachment it requires makes it hard to take sides. Neither side in a historical contest can be ethically pure, even if one of them is extremely less pure. Conversely, taking sides makes it hard to be rigorously ethical. It is necessary to wander a little, to err, like the hero of romance. Negotiating the difficult exchanges between these imperatives – of ethical reflection and of political commitment – when we are submerged in a phenomenon the intellectual mastery of which can never be attained, is the thinking of history in Spenserian romance.

*La Cava: romance and history
in Corral and Cervantes*

Marina S. Brownlee

Though seemingly alien discourses, romance and historiography recurrently overlap with each other.¹ However escapist the genre of romance often appears to be, its continual reinvention of itself is an implicit response to changing political and historical configurations.² A conspicuous case in point is the transformation of romance in the early modern period. The early seventeenth-century work that is regularly thought to signal the obsolescence of chivalric romance and the emergence of the modern novel – Cervantes’s *Don Quijote* – is more than a penetrating critique of romance conventions. Cervantes is rightly credited with the brilliant use of romance constructs to expose the ongoing historical crisis of the Spanish empire. But the relationship between romance and history does not operate only in one direction. Several decades before *Don Quijote*, the historian Bernal Díaz presents Spain’s New World conquests and colonization as a continuation of the exploits of Amadís de Gaula – the protagonist of the work (discussed above in [Chapter 11](#)) that is often considered to be the first romance that is distinctly Spanish in origin.³

The long-standing interaction between romance and history in Spain begins well before *Amadís de Gaula*. Drawing upon a broad literary movement in Europe, a number of the earliest romances in Spain are “romances of antiquity,” based on the legendary histories of early empires. The writers of such works evoke ancient historical figures and events in order to celebrate empowering myths projected upon the past by the medieval present, even while they invoke venerable Latin models in order to legitimate their own literary endeavors. In a sense, they present their own translation of learning (*translatio studii*) into romance as itself a testimony to the transfer of empire (*translatio imperii*). The formative *translatio* of the “matter of Rome” in medieval French romance is considered in detail in [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) of this volume.

But Spain has a foundational subject matter of its own. Iberia is the area of the Mediterranean that undergoes the most protracted encounter

between Christianity and Islam, a momentous intersection between the “West” and the “East.” The period of the Moorish invasion of 711 constitutes a primal epoch, in some respects as formative in imaginative terms as the era of Troy or the time of Camelot.⁴ As in the case of the Trojan and Arthurian legends, efforts to retell the epoch of 711 entail forging mythic connections in order to legitimate empire in a temporally remote time-frame. Previous chapters in this volume explore such legitimating movements in France, Germany, and Italy in texts ranging from the medieval to the early modern period.⁵ In this essay, I would like to concentrate on two texts from Spain that evoke its own formative epoch. One, which offers a direct account of the period, is the *Crónica sarracina*, composed in about 1430 by Pedro del Corral. The other, a narrative more allusive in this regard, is the story known as “The Captive’s Tale” that Cervantes inserts in chapters 39–42 of the first part of *Don Quijote*, published in 1605.

Chronologically, these texts nearly frame the development of romance that is indigenous to Spain. Corral’s work predates the first published form of the *Amadís* by some eighty years. Cervantes’s work postdates by a few years – and effectively terminates – the extraordinary sequence of Spanish romances that follow the *Amadís*. But the *Crónica* and the “Captive’s Tale” are framing texts in more ways than one. Both of them implicitly meditate on the interaction between romance and history. Both of them suggest the intricacy of movements in time, the interweaving of past and present events. And both of them dramatize such complexities by the figure of an ambiguous woman – in the *Crónica*, the figure of La Cava, a legendary woman frequently implicated with the fall of Spain in 711; in the “Captive’s Tale,” the figure of Zoraida, a woman affiliated with both Islam and Christianity and intriguingly associated in the tale with La Cava herself.⁶ Divided between two worlds, La Cava and Zoraida are virtually figures for the hybrid character of romance and history at large.

Nearly everything about Corral’s work, *La crónica del rey don Rodrigo con la destrucción de España* (*The Chronicle of King Rodrigo with the Destruction of Spain*) is problematic. Contemporary criticism of the work has tended to dwell more on the text’s perceived accuracy (or inaccuracy) regarding the events surrounding the invasion than on its fifteenth-century context of production. Such a view implies a rather static approach to reception that gives inadequate attention to the cultural changes of seven hundred years between the invasion of 711 and the composition of the text. Fascinating from many points of view, the *Crónica* has been construed primarily as a masterful conflation of the deeds of Rodrigo (the last Visigothic king prior to the invasion) and of Pelayo (the initiator of the

Reconquest, c. 722). The author displays a deep familiarity with the key Christian chronicles and even a prominent Moorish one.⁷ Already in the fifteenth century, it is both esteemed by Spanish luminaries such as Enrique de Villena⁸ and vilified by the equally illustrious Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, who dismisses the text as a “fib or blatant lie” [*trufa o mentira paladina*].⁹

Beyond this notable discrepancy in medieval assessments is the ongoing controversy regarding the *Crónica*'s generic affinities. The work continues to be construed either as history or as romance. In the view of some, it appropriates the laurels traditionally accorded to the *Amadís* as the first indigenous Iberian romance.¹⁰ By others it is lauded as “the first Spanish historical novel.”¹¹ The dramatic discrepancy in the assessment of this work is, it seems to me, the result of its boldly metaliterary nature, a feature which is at the core of Corral's enterprise. Pardo considers the “greatest paradox” of the work to be that it is “simultaneously one of the first examples of chivalric romance when they were most popular” and yet “one of the first critiques, both comic and serious, of this form.”¹²

One of the most striking features of the text with regard to questions about history and romance is its alleged compilation. No author is named; not even Pedro del Corral is credited with authorship in the many surviving fifteenth-century manuscripts of this ambitious work. In the work two eyewitnesses (obvious inventions of Corral) are posited as the collective authors of the *Crónica*, along with a character who discovers the two manuscripts and stitches them together. Meanwhile, in a rather Cervantine manner, Corral presents himself as the editor instead.¹³ This is a provocative form of identity-switching, which reveals the devious authority of the writer and calls into question the ultimate veracity of his historiography. Part and parcel of this metaliterariness is the evocation of the *topos* of the miraculously rediscovered lost book, suggesting the need for an objective third-person authority.

One expression of that need is the strain in the notion of eyewitness narrative in the work. The chronicler Eleastras, for example, initially claims that he will scrupulously report everything that transpired, omitting no detail. Yet he both does and does not comply, as in the following entry regarding the mention of twenty noble ladies:

Eleastras, whom King Rodrigo commanded to set in writing all the events as they happened, says that more than twenty high-born maidens (not mentioned here because they were not descended from the Goths) gave many jewels to their knights in order to show their good breeding to the foreigners.

E dize Eleastras, a quien el Rey don Rodrigo mandó poner por escripto todas las cosas como pasavan, que más de veinte donzellas de grandes linajes, que aquí no faze mención dellas por quanto no eran de linaje de los godos, dieron este dia muchas joyas a sus cavalleros que lo hazían por se mostrar de buen talante contra los estrangeros. (I, lv, p. 261)

Elsewhere, the reader learns of details of episodes where no historian was present, as in the exchange of Luz and Favila. Corral calls the reader's attention to this authorial departure very explicitly, indicating that "no one was there other than the two of them, so they were certain their secrets would not be revealed" [*no avía ombre ni muger sino ellos ambos, e así eran bien seguros que sus poridades no las entendiese alguno*] (II, lxx, p. 123). Yet who is in charge of this account if no one is present? It seems clear that the text depends not on eyewitness authority here, but on authorial invention.

Even more unsettling for a chronicle is the lack of historical specificity about the precise years in which momentous events occur. A date is one of the most fundamental points of orientation that a history must supply its readers, but this very long narrative offers few such references. Occasionally it notes the day of the week or the month on which something important happens.¹⁴ May 10, for example, is given as the day when the Duquesa e Loreyna arrives in Toledo to request assistance at Rodrigo's court, but no reference to the year in question is included (I, xxxviii, p. 212). As for the wedding of the foreign nobles in I, lxi (p. 274), it is arranged for "*un lunes*" (a Monday).

By contrast, careful attention to days (and even hours of the day) is given in the details of the many jousting tournaments that Rodrigo organizes.¹⁵ Even here, however, virtually no reference to the year in question is given. In this respect it almost seems as if the eighth-century time-frame of the story virtually intersects with the fifteenth-century period in which the *Crónica* is composed, a time in which the centuries-old reconquest effort had notably stalled and in which ceremonial jousting had replaced true chivalric combat. In any case, it is especially striking that at the end of I, ccliii, there is elaborate (Islamic) time-referencing with regard to Julián's call to battle: "That was on a Sunday, the fifth of April, which is the month of the Moon, which was the ninety-fourth year the Arabs calculated after the birth of Mohammed. And in the era of Caesar it was the year 752. And 714 after the birth of Christ." [*Esto fue domingo cinco días de abril, que es el mes de la luna, que era el año de los alarabes a Mahomad de su nacencia a noventa e quarto. E a la hera de César setecientos e cinquenta e dos. E a la Encarnación de setecientos e quatorze*] (I, ccliii, p. 620). Whatever the possible polemical or conceptual implications of this

multiple dating, the plurality of time references in the passage serves to underscore contrastively the general lack of chronological information in the *Crónica* as a whole.

Readerly skepticism about the historical authority of the text is deepened by the circumstances associated with its supposed discovery. Rather than being miraculously recovered from the ruins of an illustrious, ancient library or monastery, the *Crónica* manuscript is tellingly found in the possession of a merchant (I, cclviii, p. 642). Such an alignment of the text with an anonymous contemporary figure evocative of urban conditions and personal cash flow suggests prosaic elements that defy both the epic mentality and the chivalric world of knights and ladies.¹⁶ This is an obvious red flag signaling Corral's new enterprise, his daring recasting of history and romance material for a vastly altered readership. As Hans Robert Jauss once remarked, "One puts a fairy-tale princess in a novella, and one notices the difference."¹⁷

With his provocative treatment of narrative authority, Corral signals his metaliterary – perhaps even metahistorical – project. The *Crónica* repeatedly plays off strategies that Gianni Vattimo describes as "archaism" (which seeks to return to "origins and mythical knowledge without asking about the 'intermediary' period") and "cultural relativism" (which evokes "separate and autonomous cultural universes" without clearly delineating between them¹⁸ – in Corral's case, the universes of the eighth and fifteenth centuries in Spain).¹⁹ But the hybridity of the text extends beyond the treatment of chronology to the treatment of character. Corral considerably complicates a number of iconic characters in the eighth-century crisis and implicates their personal ambiguities with the problems of his own period. Given the practical limits of this essay, perhaps I could concentrate on two such characters: Rodrigo, the king under whose rule the Moors invade the Iberian peninsula, and La Cava, the legendary woman who is said to have been raped by Rodrigo and whose father, Count Julián, allegedly avenges the violation by helping the Moors defeat Spain.

From his earliest historical representations (beginning about 754), Rodrigo is a problematic figure. It is difficult to assign much specificity to him and, more broadly, to the empirical truth surrounding the events of 711. As Joseph O'Callaghan remarks: "the circumstances that led to the Muslim invasion of the peninsula . . . are involved in extraordinary confusion."²⁰ It is known that during a period of seemingly perennial civil war, Rodrigo was elected to the throne at the royal city of Toledo in 710, in keeping with the Visigothic model for determining kingship – unlike the Hispano-Roman model, which saw the crown as a hereditary office. His

nemesis (Akhila, the son of Vitiza, Rodrigo's predecessor) refused to accept Rodrigo as legitimate commander; provoked by this perceived usurpation, he is said to have sent emissaries to Africa to seek Muslim military reinforcements, thus facilitating the Iberian conquest.

Corral presents the power-play between the forces of Rodrigo and Akhila from more than one perspective. While he describes the positive responses of Rodrigo's supporters, he is more graphic in articulating the long-term tragic consequences of the struggle. In a poignant lament (I, xvii, p. 139) regarding the human devastation in this conflict, for example, he writes:

Oh, wretched Spain, today you are to be destroyed forever! Excessive pridefulness in the noble lineage of the Goths will lead to their own destruction, and thereby to the destruction of all Spain [*la gran destrucción de toda España*] that was foretold by the ancient sages . . .

From the opening pages to the final words of the text we are repeatedly reminded of the high human cost of this "first destruction of Spain of the good knights in the time of Rodrigo" [*primera destrucción de España de los buenos caballeros en el tiempo de don Rodrigo*] (I, xvii, p. 153). The author's pessimism regarding this eighth-century "first destruction" echoes his own strife-torn situation amid fifteenth-century Spain's protracted civil wars. The dysfunctional nature of the monarchy of Juan II (1405–54), the dangers posed by the ruling class for the country, the stalled reconquest, graft, greed, and corruption on the part of both Church and state, as well as a relentless anti-Semitism plagued both periods in Spain's history.²¹

The portrayal of Rodrigo himself is full of contradictions. He is described as being brave in war ("he conducted himself in battle as the most courageous [*más bravo*] knight who ever lived") (I, xvii, p. 148), yet he fled from the battlefield in his final encounter. In the closing pages of [Part I](#) Corral affirms that "the King was very wise in war as well as in other regal matters" [*el Rey era muy sabio, así en Guerra como en otras cosas que rey deve aver*] (I, cclv, p. 626). Yet in the next breath (in the same sentence), he contradicts this judgment, adding, "though in some things he was remiss" [*aunque en algunas cosas no lo fue*] (p. 626). This is not to mention, as Inés Cramer remarks incisively, that "in the text examples of his wisdom [*su sabiduría*] are lacking, though we find many instances of his impulsive and arrogant behavior."²²

A stunning lack of *sabiduría* on the part of Rodrigo is given by some as the cause of Spain's fall, namely the king's arrogant violation of the Palace of Hercules (I, xxx, pp. 176–81). According to legends (both Christian and

Islamic), in ancient times the first king of Spain built a palace and deposited a secret inside it.²³ He sealed the palace with a padlock and instructed each of his successors to add an extra lock to insure the preservation of the secret. After twenty-six kings had followed these instructions, Rodrigo violated the order, breaking into the palace – much against the passionate protestations of his counselors. Motivated by a kind of Adamic curiosity and also by greed, he broke the locks, entering the forbidden room, where he saw a chamber on whose walls were painted Arab warriors brandishing swords and scimitars. A message inscribed in the ark warned that once the violation had been effected, Spain would fall to the enemies. Yet given this prophecy, the inevitability of his violation seems to suggest predestination. The narrative states that the violation was “destined to occur” [*lo que avía de ser*]. If such is the case, to what degree can Rodrigo be blamed personally for the fall of Spain as a consequence of his transgressive entry into the palace?

The received story offered the conquered Christians a convenient scapegoat: they were destined to lose once Rodrigo defied his royal obligation, a violation that was preordained. The story was also important to the conquerors – spurred on by the knowledge that their invasion constituted a prophetic fulfillment. Yet in Corral’s work the doom of Rodrigo has a fifteenth-century dimension, suggesting the collective *pecado* of the land’s inhabitants. Rodrigo defies the repeated warnings of his men, entering the palace largely to plunder it for his battle-related expenses and his extravagant international jousting tournaments. Corral’s account evokes the chivalric lifestyle of fifteenth-century Spain and its outmoded expectations of noble behavior. By the time of Corral knightly combat is largely vestigial and ceremonial. In his period the much-discussed social and moral crisis of the country revolves precisely around the tenuous position of noble pedigree in a bourgeois society and the equation of money with honor. The climate of civil war and Rodrigo’s usurpation of funds for personal pleasure and power mirror the waste and moral impoverishment of fifteenth-century Spain.²⁴ And yet upon his death Rodrigo is explicitly identified as being with life everlasting, in spite of the symbolically significant consumption of his heart and genitals by a snake (II, ccliii, p. 404). It is left to the reader to reconcile the disparity in his presentation.

The figure of La Cava has an ambivalence of her own in this labyrinthine political allegory. Whether or not such a figure historically existed continues to be a matter of debate. The historian Sánchez Albornoz believes that the legend of this raped woman originated as an invention of the Goths to mask the Vitizanos’ collusion with the infidel raiders; others claim that the legend

is Muslim in origin. What is known for certain is that she was not the daughter of the historical Conde don Julián.

Whatever her status in history, in the work of Corral she is characterized not as a victimizer but as a victim. Drawing upon the tenth-century *Crónica del moro Rasis*, Corral does initially introduce La Cava as a tool of the Devil, the Evil One who wrought the destruction of Spain that was foretold in the message exposed when Rodrigo defiled the Palace of Hercules: "given the sentence that Spain would be destroyed during the King's lifetime, the Devil had to initiate the destruction" [*como ya era dada la sentencia contra el Rey que en su vuda fuese destruida España, el diablo ovo de buscar comienço para que oviese lugar la destrucción*] (I, clxiii, p. 448). The Devil realizes that La Cava can be the agent of this destruction. But Corral presents her as an honorable maiden who finds Rodrigo's amorous advances to be repulsive. Feigning ignorance at first, she pretends not to understand his immodest proposal, which is anything but the discourse of a *rey sabio*. His remark regarding his queen and God's will is grotesque: "if the Queen dies, I will refuse any wife but you; be aware that God makes me love your beauty" [*si en este tiempo la Reina muere que yo no avré ninguna otra por muger sino a ti; para ojo bien que Dios te faze en yo me enamorar de tu fermosura*] (I, clxvii, p. 452). In spite of her protest that such an act would constitute treason (I, clxx, p. 453) as well as a violation of her will, Rodrigo rapes her with the aid of one of his vassals, while she refrains from screaming so that the queen would not become aware of her defilement and their mutual dishonor (I, clxxii, p. 455). After this traumatic attack we are told that La Cava loses her beauty as well. In romance such a physical transformation might come as the result of a character's moral transgression, but clearly she is blameless.

Her single-minded resistance shows that La Cava is by no means the wicked woman of conventional lore, a woman who seduces an unwilling king, thereby precipitating the demise of the peninsula when her father colludes with the infidel to avenge the dishonor. Not only is she the victim of Rodrigo's passion; her ghastly death crystallizes the painful conclusion to her unfortunate life. In Corral's work La Cava succumbs as a result of an infection brought about by a fishbone that becomes lodged between her nail and finger. A painful infection results, and she dies from it after consuming her own flesh in a vain attempt to diminish the suffering. Such narrative violence does not correspond to the conventional life and death experiences of a romance heroine. It is, I maintain, a grotesque and anomalous invention created by Corral himself, signaling the complexity of his depiction in comparison with her representation in previous sources.

In his presentations of both Rodrigo and La Cava, Corral tends to demythologize the icons of the past. If Rodrigo is not just a victim but a violator, Corral's account of the monarch's soliloquies when he confesses, repents, and does penance for his destructive pride and greed further complicates the presentation of the king, and this is why Corral invents them. If La Cava is deployed by the Devil but is not herself diabolical, there is particular poignancy in her anguished remarks to her mother that had she not revealed the rape to her father, Spain would not have been destroyed. By such means the reader is invited to ponder the polysemy of historical phenomena and the selectivity involved in any narrative account.

As for the *Crónica* itself, it is a hybrid in both generic and chronological terms. In its mix of epic history (by definition concerned with nation-building) and romance (the utopic vehicle for personal self-aggrandizement), the *Chronicle of King Rodrigo with the Destruction of Spain* points at once to two epochs, exposing some of the acute tensions of both the eighth and the fifteenth centuries. In the end, perhaps nothing more graphically displays its literary and conceptual complexity than its account of the death of Rodrigo – with an invasive snake providing a gruesome reminder of his transgression, yet with church bells tolling by themselves and signaling his salvation. The *Crónica* deeply destabilizes any single-minded approach to the movements of history and the modes of romance.

Written some one hundred and fifty years after the composition of Corral's *Crónica*, the intercalated narrative known as "The Captive's Tale" in Cervantes's *Don Quijote* (I, 39–42) offers an even denser meditation on the interplay of history and romance, suggesting some of the ways in which "history is a poetic act," as Hayden White has argued.²⁵ The tale is rich in its evocation of history – not only the imperial history of Spain, but also the personal history of Cervantes as a soldier against the Turkish empire and a five-year prisoner of war in Algiers (1575–80). With its pervasive sense of the rivalry between the Christian and Muslim worlds, the "Captive's Tale" is routinely invoked as an example of historical discourse amid the compendium of fictional discourses in *Don Quijote*, [Part 1](#). Yet the narrative is hardly accurate in the reporting of history. Though it is supposedly based on events with an endpoint of 1589–90, for example, there is an apparent discrepancy between this dating and the Spanish Captive's claim to have been absent from his homeland for twenty-two years – in view of the publication of the book itself in 1605; and this is not the only historical discrepancy in the tale, which is the longest intercalated narrative of the entire *Quijote*.²⁶

The “Captive’s Tale” is a study in hybridity – not only in terms of genre, but also in terms of racial, national, and psychic identity. In my view the tale has been the object of unwarranted sentimentalizing, primarily because of its association with the complex cultural responses evoked by the expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1501, the uprising of Moriscos (Moors converted to Christianity) in 1568–70, the aftermath of that bloody conflict, culminating in the 1609 edict of expulsion of the Moriscos, and the professed desire of the female protagonist of “The Captive’s Tale” (the Moorish Zoraida) to become Christian.

That Cervantes wants to dwell on the intricacies of racial and religious identity is made clear from Zoraida’s stunning initial appearance; she is introduced in a fragmentary manner, by a reference to her hand. The Captive describes this amazing sight saying, “I looked at the window, and saw an extremely white hand” [*miré la ventana, y vi que pore la salía una muy blanca mano*].²⁷ The intriguing whiteness of her hand is emphasized again a few sentences later; the hue leaves the Captive and his fellow Christian prisoners baffled as they gaze upon it from the enclosed space of their captivity, the prison yard.

This is not simply one more white hand belonging to a damsel in a chivalric world, like several others evoked in the *Quijote*.²⁸ When the hand produces a small cross made of reeds, the prisoners assume at first that it must belong to a white Christian woman imprisoned in the house. When they reflect further on the hand, in conjunction with the jewelry it displays, they conclude that it may instead be the hand of a renegade Christian woman, given the attraction Muslim men feel for them. The Captive later acknowledges how wrong they were in both of these hypotheses. The gesturing hand, along with the symbols of religion and wealth that it bears, presents the reader with a provocative mystery.

The repeated early appearances of Zoraida in the form of a hand are significant, programmatically establishing her identity as an enigmatic, ambiguous character. She presents herself as a Moor fervently wishing to become a Christian because of the inspirational example of her Christian slave governess – hence her need for rescue by the Christian captives seeking to return to Spain. As such, she seems to conform to the archetype of the Muslim woman saved by a Christian man, just as the Captive himself appears to suggest the archetype of the captive saved by a woman. Yet this is by no means a transparent situation. It is hard to know whether Zoraida saves the Captive for love or whether she views him rather as her means of achieving freedom by relocating in Spain, away from the stifling atmosphere of her father’s house in Algiers. It is similarly unclear to what

degree she is committed to a new Christian identity. The Captive is clearly in love with her – especially her beauty – and with her desire to convert. Yet his assessment is only one possibility, as various inconsistencies make clear. Truth here is in the eye of the beholder.

Cervantes's contemporaries were aware of another layer of the story of "Zoraida" – the historically real, extratextual existence of a related figure, her genealogically Christian roots, and the Christian ancestry of her father as well. Cervantine criticism regarding this tale has tended to reject the historical Zoraida figure (actually named Zohara) in favor of a wholly original fictional character. I would like to suggest, however, that Cervantes plays the historical evidence off against his own creation, implicitly commenting on the interplay of history and fiction and the intricacies of hybrid identity at large.

The lives of the historical Zohara and her father are treated not only in Cervantes's dramatic works, but also in a variety of chronicles and letters, as Jaime Oliver Asín has amply documented. From these we learn the racial and ethnic "background" of Zoraida's white hand: the historical Zohara was the granddaughter of a heroic Spanish woman from Mallorca – hence, she was a *mestiza*. Not only was Zohara's mother the daughter of a Christian woman; Agi Morato, her father, was likewise the son of a Christian woman.²⁹ This may provide some context not only for Zoraida's curiously white skin tone but perhaps also for her father's kindly treatment of Christians, as demonstrated by his response when the Captive trespasses on his property by penetrating his garden. Cervantes underscores this positive portrayal by a verbal resonance, alluding to him as an "honorable man" [*hombre de bien*], the same words chosen to characterize the Captive's brother (a judge on his way to represent the empire in the New World) and even the Muslim renegade Uchali Fartax. This analogy of Christian and Muslim is one of many bold interreligious and inter-ethnic associations in the "Captive's Tale" at large.

Zohara's historically real husband, Abd al-Malik, offers yet another fascinating ethnic and cultural hybrid. He was a Europeanized Moor, to quote Asín, "more Christian than Moor."³⁰ This atypical Moor drank wine, ate pork, and, according to Queen Elizabeth's North African emissary Edmund Hogan, he possessed an extensive knowledge of both Old and New Testaments. He even assisted at the celebration of Mass and established a hospital for Christians in Morocco. Because of these extraordinary displays of interfaith *caritas* Abd al-Malik was understandably beloved by many Christians.

His wedding to Zohara took place about 1574, and in 1575 a son was born to them, as documented in a letter written to Philip II by Francisco

Gasparo Corso. Soon after the birth, Zohara's husband left Algiers with the goal of conquering Morocco, which he succeeded in doing, entering it victoriously in 1576 and proclaiming himself sultan. As an enlightened politician he established diplomatic relations with France and England, while also continuing to cultivate the contact with Philip II that he had begun during his years in Algiers. Foremost among his goals was the desire to ally himself militarily with the Spanish monarch in order to expel the Turks from Algiers. But Zohara and her son became prisoners of the Turks, and the family was never reunited. Zohara was widowed in 1578, left with a three-year-old son, and she never reached Spain. Cervantes was minutely aware of this unfortunate personal history, given not only Zohara's public profile and especially that of her husband, but also the fact that one of the men who was on a ship that was intended to effect Zohara's reunion with her husband was a colleague of Cervantes himself during his five-year captivity. It is from this true narrative of racial, ethnic, and religious hybridity that Cervantes exploits its romance potential, implicitly commenting on the ambivalences of personal identity and the ambiguities of historical discourse itself.

Zoraida regularly expresses herself by gestures, although her communication includes letters to the Captive regarding her willingness to marry him and to pay for the boat that will take them to Spain; translated speech; and the halting, fractured Spanish exclamation that her name is *not* Zoraida but Maria. Nothing in her communication, however, conveys a declaration of love, only a willingness to marry the Captive or someone else once they reach Spain. Nor does she show much comprehension of the faith that she claims to favor. Once they have reached Spain, even the Captive says that she will have to learn the tenets of the faith before she can be baptized.

The Christian romance vignette with which readers are eventually confronted as the Captive and Zoraida arrive at an inn – a calque on Joseph with Mary on the donkey, who are told that there is no room at the inn – offers a false impression of this couple. Their journey has little to do with love or religion. From the start, Zoraida's remarks about Mary display ignorance of the Virgin's power and purview, just as she kisses the crucifix not because of its symbolic value, but because she is told that that is what she should do. At an early stage in the escape from Algiers she vows that "she would throw herself into the ocean [*se arrojaría en la mar*] (423) rather than see with her own eyes the father who had loved her taken prisoner on her account" (359). Suicide is, of course, an extreme sin for a Christian, an untenable appropriation of the God-given gift of life. Moreover, having

proclaimed her filial devotion after her father's suicide attempt, Zoraida neither yields to him nor endeavors to convert him, as we might expect. She rather acknowledges (after their separation) that her determination to convert seems "as virtuous to me, my beloved father, as it appears wicked to you" (363) [*tan buena como tú, padre amado, la juzgas por mala*] (427). Though her sea journey may be linked to spiritual imperatives, it may also be linked to her rewriting of the story of Zohara, who was prevented by the Turks from joining her husband, and/or to her desire to inhabit the land of Zohara's Christian ancestors, whose light skin tone Zoraida shares.

This may be one reason why she is intriguingly associated with the cape of "La Cava Rumia," where her father is left to die of despair as Zoraida and the Captive continue their escape. The narrator relates that in Spanish the name means "Wicked Christian Woman," and he notes that in Moorish tradition the cape is the burial site of that very "Cava" through whom Spain was lost. As we have seen, Corral's *Crónica* problematizes the received story of La Cava. Is Cervantes's Zoraida in some measure a *cava* (a word meaning "prostitute" in Arabic)? If so, how? In her treatment of her father and/or her new faith? As Zoraida is separated from her father at "La Cava Rumia" he himself refers to her as a wicked woman and claims that she has changed her faith because she knows that there is more licentiousness in Spain than in the country she is leaving. Yet as the ship pulls away he pleads for her to return to him and declares that he forgives her. As for the narrator, no sooner does he begin his account of "La Cava Rumia" and its ominous quality for the Moors than he indicates, by contrast, that "for us it was not the shelter of a wicked woman, but a safe haven and refuge, for the sea had become very rough" (362) [*Puerto que para nosotros no fue abrigo de mala mujer, sino Puerto seguro de nuestro remedio, según andaba alterada la mar*] (427). Yet after he describes how the ship later leaves the cape with the help of a favorable wind, the narrator wonders whether fortune or the curses of Zoraida's father underlie the next encounter – the sudden approach of a hostile vessel (bearing French pirates who proceed to rob Zoraida and the other passengers). The "Captive's Tale" riddlingly suggests motives and meanings without resolving them, even while it implicates the romance of escape with the complexities of history.

The ambiguities of "La Cava Rumia" involve more than questions about a place; they imply broader inquiries about personal identity in the "Captive's Tale" at large. Zoraida is not the only figure in the tale with divided associations. The Captive himself, a Christian long imprisoned in a Muslim land, has a "rather dark" face, presumably from prolonged

exposure to the sun. If his darkened skin serves as a dramatic contrast to Zoraida's whiteness, it also underscores in terms of skin tone how deceptively porous the terms "Moor" and "Christian" can be. Similar ambiguities are associated with clothing. When the refugees first land on Spanish soil, they are spotted by a shepherd who assumes from the clothing of two of them (Zoraida and the renegade Uchali Fartax) that they are invading Moors, whereby he begins shouting frantically to alert the coast guard. The group hurriedly decides that the renegade must shed his Turkish garb, donning the coat of a Christian captive instead. After this is done and the patrol subsequently arrives, they are identified as Christians. The notion that the difference between Christians and Moors can be disguised so readily has no simple moral. A pessimist would interpret such facile identity-switching not as a justification for tolerance, but as its opposite – as a reason to suspect that the enemy is masquerading as Christian, moving through Spain undetected, while potentially posing an enormous military, political, and religious threat.

The pessimist would hear no wedding bells of romance fulfillment for the hybrid couple of Zoraida and the Captive. Though a reader may assume that they will marry, they have not married by the end of the narrative. The apparent *mestizaje* of Zoraida, as well as her status as a convert, may or may not be viewed with tolerance and approval in the land to which she has turned. Perhaps her white skin tone will trump her *conversa* status; after all, she is light-skinned enough to blush when she is praised for her beauty by the residents at the inn. Even so, how might the Captive fare as the husband of this convert, leaving aside the problematic difference in their ages (he is forty, she is "very young" – 14 or 15)? One of the few reliable conclusions that can be drawn from the "Captive's Tale" is that it dramatizes the sense in Spain of constant danger stemming from the risk of false affidavits, false conversions, and the genuine threat of having the enemy not simply at the gates, but within them. In this respect the tale itself is an imbedded commentary on the hybridity and complexity of Cervantes's Spain.

In view of its implications for *Don Quijote* at large, it is understandable that Cervantes privileges "The Captive's Tale" by beginning it with the same words that open the entire work: "*En un lugar de . . .*" [somewhere . . .].³¹ The tale, written c. 1589–90 and thus predating the writing of *Part I* as a whole, is virtually a paradigm for the ambivalence of meaning, the difficulty of evaluation, and the uncanniness of life. In more than a technical sense it is a story within a story. It explores the interaction between diverse worlds – not only rival worlds of early modern Spain, but also variegated

worlds of the human imagination. If the *Chronicle of King Rodrigo with the Destruction of Spain* already complicates the understanding of a foundational past, the “Captive’s Tale” exposes some of the problems of codifying a manifold present. In the narratives of Corral and Cervantes, “La Cava” is not simply an enigmatic figure in the early and late annals of Spain. The complexity of her presence intriguingly suggests how the very categories of romance repeatedly intersect with the contingencies of history.

Closing reference points

*Afterword and afterward: romance, history, time**Jon Whitman*

Almost a century ago a poet in the West imagined a sea journey eastward to an exotic realm in which “what is past, or passing, or to come” was subsumed in wondrous song.¹ There are ambiguities concerning the transcendence of time in his lyrical vision, but in the visions of romance the ambiguities are often far more acute. From the time in which romancers first imagine their subject matter sailing westward, as it were, they repeatedly find both their subjects and their songs radically implicated in what is past, or passing, or to come.

Historicizing romance

To some extent, the historical complexion of romance is a feature of any literature. The historicizing turn in literary studies of recent decades has emphasized this aspect of imaginative texts, but no alignment with a particular critical movement (which like any movement has its strains) is required to situate romance broadly in the matrix of history. The essays in this study, conceived from diverse critical perspectives, have suggested some of the ways in which romance from the medieval to the early modern period recurrently exposes the temporal conditions in which it emerges – whether it is a French romance displaying contemporary concerns about genealogy (Chapter 2) or one illustrating the enterprising exploits of *juvenes* (Chapter 4), whether it is a German narrative reflecting the politics of the Crusades (Chapter 5) or an English one evoking the Wars of the Roses (Chapter 8), whether it is an Italian text betraying the aftershocks of a French invasion (Chapter 10) or a Spanish one revealing the tensions between rival empires (Chapter 15).

But there is a deeper sense in which romance and history recurrently intersect with each other. During the hundreds of years of its development, romance in some of its most prominent forms is more than a passing reflection of history; it is a prolonged reflection *about* history. At times the

very modulation of its narrative designs seems almost to be a meditation about changing approaches to temporal experience. It is possible to perceive this movement not only in texts conventionally treated as romances but also in generically mixed texts informed by the patterns of romance. Perhaps even a brief glance backward and forward at the three “matters” of Rome, Britain, and France – drawing in part upon the chapters of this volume – can suggest something of the scope of the phenomenon.²

“Rome”: trajectories of Troy

From its beginnings in the twelfth century, the act of writing *romans d'antiquité* is itself a display of historical change. Exemplifying the movement of empire from Troy to Rome and beyond it by translating “Rome” *en romanz*, the form of the *roman antique* has a conspicuously performative dimension. But the performance is fraught with difficulties. The ancient past – with its transgressive desires and its pagan beliefs (Chapters 2 and 3) – chronically resists accommodation to the medieval present. The very idiom of the austere thirteenth-century *Roman de Troie en prose* exhibits the drive to “straighten out” and “clarify” that past.

Nothing more tellingly suggests the complexities of that process than the afterlife of a brief, discontinuous story in Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s twelfth-century romance of Troy, the story of Troilus. Scholarship has long described the early movement of that story: how it is adapted restrictively in a thirteenth-century moralizing “history” in Latin prose; eventually expanded into an independent narrative of amorous love and loss in the fourteenth-century Italian poetry of Boccaccio; and extensively “historicized” later in the century in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*.³ But Chaucer’s historicization passes beyond the act of elaborating the ancient setting of the love affair or correlating the fortunes of Troilus with the fortunes of Troy.⁴ It passes even beyond the historical sensitivities of characters inside the story who ruminate about temporality and destiny – with Troilus, for example, agonizing about future contingents and divine foreknowledge, or Criseyde worrying about the prospective treatment of her own name.⁵ Chaucer’s historicizing imagination is more radical in form. Reworking a story with a catastrophic end that he cannot escape, repeatedly “intervening” in the narrative to leave undecided questions about Criseyde’s betrayal, continually oscillating between an impassioned engagement with the transient world of his antique characters and a detached recognition that that world is past – he makes the very act of telling the tale dramatize the tension between contingency and destiny in

the historical process itself.⁶ Seeking tenaciously to keep open an otherwise closed history, in the end Chaucer realizes, no less than Troilus, that “al is lost that he hath ben aboute.”⁷ But scarcely does he revoke the antique world (“Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites!”) before he evokes his own revival of “antique” poetry: “Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche / In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche.”⁸ His poem is virtually his own lingering love affair with a pagan past that he knows is defective.

For all that remains of the “forme” of such speech in later medieval treatments of the story of Troilus, in the early modern period a radical reformulation of the tale practically shatters the form. In his early seventeenth-century “problem play” of *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare broadly demystifies the mists of Troy – exposing its legendary past to a relentless present-tense gaze (“In Troy there lies the scene . . .”); pre-telling the eventual fate of belated characters in their immediate present (Pandarus: “If ever you prove false one to another . . . let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between panders”); attenuating the very density of a distant history by a caustic critique of its here-and-now. In the end, Troilus does not just surmise from afar that “al is lost”; personally observing Cressida wavering in the enemy camp, he becomes a bewildered eyewitness to the abrupt passing of apparent identity into a shadow of itself: “This is and is not Cressid.”⁹

“Britain”: Camelot and end-time

Whatever the fascination of the “matter of Britain,” disintegration had long been its destiny. Ever since Geoffrey of Monmouth’s formative, twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain* (Chapter 4), the realm of Arthur was elaborately situated in a history that ended in calamity. It might be thought that the initiation of Arthurian romance later in the twelfth century by Chrétien de Troyes provides a kind of holding action, suspending that fatal denouement by fashioning a “timeless” epoch. Whether or not such a thought is well-conceived,¹⁰ Chrétien’s own last (incomplete) work introduces into Arthurian romance an object that eventually realigns its very sense of end-time and radically historicizes the matter of Britain: the *grail*.

However “folkloristic” or “fabulous” its possible literary origins, by the early thirteenth century the Grail (in various forms) is central to French and German narratives with conspicuously eschatological strains (Chapters 5 and 6). Already in the influential work of Robert de Boron, the Grail is portrayed as the numinous “Holy Grail,” a redemptive relic from

the time of Jesus with a historic destiny. With the vast *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*, written in “authenticating” French prose in the early decades of the century, the matter of Britain includes not only an elaborate history, but an expansive counter-history – different from the secularized history of Geoffrey of Monmouth and associated with Christian sacred history itself. In this alternative history the foundational figure of early Britain is not the Troy-affiliated Brutus but the Holy-Sepulchre-affiliated Joseph of Arimathea, together with his son, the first (apocryphal) bishop of the Christian Church. In a provocative version of *translatio imperii*, the sacred relic entrusted to them is transferred from East to West, and the Grail history initiated by their activity culminates in the momentous time of Arthur – when the Grail eventually leaves the West, the Grail knights in turn sail eastward, and a descendant of the Davidic line (the Christological Galahad) rapturously envisions the transporting object before his death.¹¹ Research in recent years has examined in detail possible relations between the early development of Grail romance and the contemporary, conflicted drive of the Christian West to salvage something of an elusive but originary East, the Crusades.¹² But whatever the interplay between the Grail story and contemporary history, Galahad’s eastward journey to his own ecstatic end leaves the Arthurian realm at large in limbo, fatally entangled in “what is past, or passing, or to come.”

While the Grail story itself is gradually attenuated in broad accounts of knightly adventure in Arthurian romance, the end that ominously looms over Arthurian civilization as a whole is intensively scrutinized in late medieval narratives such as the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Malory’s *Morte Darthur* (Chapters 7 and 8). It seems that no individual or institution can finally prevent the Arthurian world from being overtaken by events. Yet even as the kingdom careers into closure there are moments that seem to open a space for personal reflection and suspend the rush of time. Elsewhere I have explored Arthurian narratives of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that depict conflicted characters in extended acts of historical consciousness, in which the movement of history virtually modulates into the movement of the mind.¹³ By the early modern period, the suspension of Arthurian destiny and the intersection of history with the mentality and biography of an individual come to be structuralized in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* – where Arthur is portrayed not shortly before his doom but before he even becomes king; where his activity is conceptualized as the paradigm of an exemplary figure; and where his story is interlaced with a variegated narrative digressing and reflecting, as it were, through the history of humankind.¹⁴ Long after the early modern

period, when the matter of Britain is revived in an imperial Britain that nonetheless questions the historical status of an Arthurian era, the whole account of the “passing of Arthur” is finally presented in Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* as a personal act of retrospective consciousness, a “story . . . [t]old” by the last of Arthur’s surviving knights, “when the man was no more than a voice.”¹⁵

“France”: Roland before Roncevaux

The romance of the Arthurian world is not the only matter in which the day of doom is delayed and almost millennial pressures are transformed into intense preoccupations with critical moments. As with the matter of Britain, the matter of France is shadowed by a historical catastrophe – in this case, the fall of Roland at Roncevaux. However important this fateful event is for the *chansons de geste* of medieval France (Chapter 9), with the movement toward the *romanzo* in early modern Italy the narrative “role” of Roland is nearly inverted in the developing lore of Orlando. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in the exuberant *romanzi* of Boiardo and Ariosto, Orlando is deployed (and repeatedly displaced) in radically decentered narratives, in which one story line is liable to intersect with another at almost any time, and in which the progression toward an end is conspicuously counterpointed by the twists of the present (Chapters 10 and 11). A study of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* has noted some fourteen explicit plot transitions over the course of thousands of lines between one episode and the narrator’s later return to that same episode and its sequel.¹⁶ Beginning about the middle of the sixteenth century, printed editions of the *Furioso* include marginal glosses by publishers to indicate where a suspended story line can be retrieved amid the thousands of lines of the interlaced text.¹⁷ To some it might have seemed as if not only Orlando, but romance, had slipped into madness. Boiardo and Ariosto may have postponed the catastrophe at Roncevaux, but they promote another crisis – both in the temporal configuration of romance and in the long-term reception of the genre.

For however popular the new *romanzo*, chivalric romance seems never quite to recover from its adventurous early modern excursions. In sixteenth-century Italy itself, literary theorists repeatedly relegate the *romanzo* to the limbo of ahistoricity (Chapter 12). The critiques are qualified at times, but the developing tendency is exemplified in the theory and poetry of Tasso, who, while drawing upon romance, considers it too diffusive to delineate the shape of history (Chapter 13). In England near the

end of the sixteenth century, Spenser allusively deploys such diffusiveness to think through his own and other times (Chapter 14), but he situates his narrative in an exotic faerie land in which apparent events are conspicuous figurations. Though in early seventeenth-century Spain Cervantes deeply inscribes a range of historical questions in *Don Quixote* (Chapter 15), after the appearance of his work romance never fully escapes the charge that quixotic knights are prone to mistake quotidian windmills for romance wonders. It is telling that Don Quixote himself is entrapped by “enchantment” when the Canon of Toledo (who has perhaps been reading Tasso) begins his pressing critique of chivalric romance, and that later the released knight insists (as part of his protest against the critique) that the horn of Roland is still to be seen at Roncesvalles. Cervantes has his own ways of keeping open that dialogue.¹⁸

Long before (and long after) the seventeenth century there are diverse forms of romance with only distant connections to the realm of history, and from one perspective early modern concerns about the historicity of romance are newly conceived expressions of a chronic controversy that begins with the beginnings of the *roman* itself. But however complex the attitudes of individual writers, general reservations about romance in early modern theory and practice increasingly overlap with broader European drives toward a “credible” and “enlightened” literature. When the adjective “romantic” (with its cognates) first develops in the vernacular languages of Europe, beginning about the middle of the seventeenth century, it tends to designate in literary contexts what is considered to be fantastic, imaginary, or extravagant.¹⁹ By the eighteenth century, Reason itself seems to require a renunciation of works of medieval “mystification,” and that new *roman*, the developing “novel,” seems destined to relegate Roland/Orlando forever to the rearguard of history.²⁰

Fabulous facts: revivals of “romance”

But some phenomena appear to be able to survive their own dissolution. As if by an act of re-enchantment, “romance” re-enters history – though it should be stressed that configurations of “romance” in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often diverge radically from prior forms of romance.²¹ The investigation of this complex transformation, with its vast critical literature, is far beyond the scope of this volume, but in anticipating the “future” perhaps I could at least note briefly a number of broad aspects of the return of “romance” to history.

One is the developing effort to situate early romance itself in the historical conditions in which it emerges. The vanguard of this movement

is in England, beginning shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century. In the various works of Richard Hurd, Thomas Warton, and Thomas Percy in the 1760s, texts of medieval and early modern romance are treated as rich testimonies to the conditions, institutions, and codes of conduct of their times.²² Even Samuel Johnson, who early distinguishes the romance inventions of a prior era from what he regards as verisimilar narratives in his own period, comes to associate “the fictions of the *Gothick* romances” with “the real manners of the feudal times.”²³ By the first half of the nineteenth century, an essay by that formative writer of “historical romances,” Walter Scott, is advancing the argument that “romance and real history have the same common origin.”²⁴ From such perspectives, the time reflected in romance may be remote, but it is a real time, not a timeless fantasy.

For all its conceptual diversity, such historicization often has an antiquarian – some have argued, a reactionary – dimension. But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, “romance” acquires a more radical form of historicization, albeit one so frequently discussed in modern scholarship that by now it almost seems a matter of course. As if to turn the archaizing impulse inside out, to be “romantic” – in newly conceived modes – comes increasingly to be an expression of the modern, even to be *à la mode*. This wide-ranging process involves significant variation and sometimes opposition, and any generalization about it requires qualification. But on the whole, “romantic” writing in terms of this period does not need to be “authenticated” by prose; “poetry” (broadly treated) is of its very spirit. In a sense, Friedrich Schlegel asserts in an early pronouncement (1798), “all poetry is or should be romantic” [*ist oder soll alle Poesie romantisch sein*]. The extravagant irregularities of “romance” are not signs of epic deformity, but of transporting sublimity. A “romantic” narrative need not be “plausible”; it passes beyond the merely probable to the primal. “Romance” does not simply evoke a bygone world; it creatively seeks an originary or revolutionary one. Long before the period itself comes to be called “Romantic,” Novalis is declaring that “the world must be romanticized” [*Die Welt muß romantisiert werden*].²⁵

For some, already in the late eighteenth century, it is. The French Revolution promotes the thought that history itself has in effect finally converged with romance. In Wordsworth’s retrospective account, those were “times” when even the ways of social organization took on the “attraction of a country in Romance,” when “Reason” was intent on “making of herself / A prime Enchanter,” and when the setting for action was not some remote world, but “the very world which is the world / Of all

of us.”²⁶ For a range of “Romantics,” the story of *that* romance eventually turns out to be the history of a disenchantment.

Yet even that disenchantment is transfigured by a further act of historicizing romance. To those for whom a romance of the history of humankind seems increasingly remote, there remains the “romance” of the history of the human mind, in which the very notion of a quest is internalized and the crucial action is the formative activity of the imagination itself.²⁷ As my earlier comments suggest, there are interiorizing developments already in medieval and early modern romance, whereby the process of historical change is framed in movements of individual consciousness. But the revolutionary turning of the author’s own mind in Romantic and post-Romantic poetry can have a dizzying momentum of its own. When, shortly after the mid-nineteenth century, Robert Browning composes that strange mélange of the matters of France and Britain, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came,” he makes Roland the first-person narrator of a phantasmagoric quest through a waste land that seems as much psychic as physical in configuration. Roland’s horn could still be seen, insisted a quixotic Spanish knight late in the history of chivalric romance; it is virtually a sign of the times that the final, desperately defiant act by which the belated Roland of the nineteenth-century poem blows a horn seems as much a comment on the narrator’s own imaginative dilemmas as a chivalric exploit.²⁸

In a sense, the effort to resituate history in the matrix of the mind is part of a broader effort in versions of romance to reconstitute and reform the historical process at large. Not always “political” in orientation, the inner and outer visions displayed in such works nonetheless keep intersecting with each other. In still later narrative forms such as fantasy and science fiction, modern adaptations of romance repeatedly suggest how the designs of the mind are inseparable from the delineations of the future.²⁹

In any case, from the time of the medieval *roman antique*, aiming to transform through its very idiom an old order into a new one, romance is continually oriented not only toward a past, but also toward a future. It appears that even the *roman d’aventure* repeatedly tends to engage the temporal process that it often seems to evade. A case in point is that artful *roman d’aventure* discussed in the opening chapter of this volume, Chrétien’s twelfth-century *Yvain*, which finally seems more intrigued by temporal change than the nearly timeless narrative suggested by Auerbach’s account. One of the pivotal moments in that story is when Yvain, having left his wife in order to tourney for a period that is supposed to last no longer than a year, suddenly realizes to his dismay, too late, that the year

has already passed. When later, during the gradual process of restoration, Yvain rescues a number of other figures in need, he explicitly confronts the unsettling issue of coordinating the timing of one rescue with an urgent deadline for another – the rescue of a figure inseparable from both his own past and (as it emerges) his future. The period of these rescues, in turn, is chronologically associated by Chrétien with a different rescue, an episode involving Guinevere that is treated by Chrétien himself in another romance.³⁰ Apparently Yvain is not the only one who might need to take temporal contingencies into account in the movement of his romance; so might others who encounter the story, especially if they are *in medias res*. And being *in medias res* seems to be the chronic condition of anyone engaging the world of romance – including anyone writing about the subject. For in the end, romance itself is more than a retrospective attempt to reconceive what is long past; it is a far-reaching effort to imagine what is yet to come.

Notes

CHAPTER 1 ROMANCE AND HISTORY: DESIGNING THE TIMES

- 1 See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: A. Francke, 1946), translated by Willard R. Trask as *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1953; rpt. Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 123–42.
- 2 For the passage as a whole, see Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion* (*Yvain*), ed. Mario Roques, vol. iv of *Les romans de Chrétien de Troyes*, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age [89] (Paris: Champion, 1960), lines 173–580; trans. David Staines, *The Knight with the Lion*, in *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (1990; rpt. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 259–64 [257–338].
- 3 For these citations, see Auerbach, *Mimesis* (trans. Trask), pp. 130 and 133, with p. 138.
- 4 See Stephen Lewis, translating (1715) a seventeenth-century treatise by Pierre-Daniel Huet on *romans* (*Traité de l'origine des romans*) as *The History of Romances. An Enquiry . . .* (London: Printed for J. Hooke and T. Caldecott, 1715), accessed via *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, p. 132. In this work the scope of the term “romance” is extremely broad, though the quoted passage refers particularly to “French, German, and English Romances, and all the Fables of the North.” The passage is quoted in Norris J. Lacy, “Arthurian Texts in Their Historical and Social Context,” in *Arthurian Literature*, 26, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer–Boydell & Brewer, and Totawa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), pp. 140–41 [131–48].
- 5 See Filippo Sassetti, “Discorso contro l'Ariosto,” cited and translated in Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of “Orlando Furioso”* (Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 97–98.
- 6 See Petrarch, *Triumphus Cupidinis*, cited in Fabio Finotti, “The Poem of Memory: *Triumphus*,” in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 68 [63–83] (translation altered).
- 7 See Wace, *Roman de Rou*, cited and translated by Lee Patterson, who discusses Chrétien’s turn on Wace’s comment, in “The Romance of History and the

- Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” in Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 207–9 [197–230]. For Wace’s concern to distinguish fact from “fables,” see D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 16–17, 176, 180.
- 8 See Chantal Connochie-Bourgne, “La fontaine de Barenton dans l’*Image du monde* de Gossuin de Metz: Réflexion sur le statut encyclopédique du merveilleux,” in *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon*, vol. 1 (Rennes: Institut de français, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 1980), pp. 37–48, on discussions of the spring by a range of writers, among them Gerald of Wales, Alexander Neckam, and Gossuin of Metz.
- 9 The manuscript is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1450; on the slight alterations of Chrétien’s texts, see Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 16–17, with p. 237, n. 27. On the complex question of the status of Chrétien’s romances in this treatment of Wace’s history, see, e.g., Ad Putter, “Finding Time for Romance: Mediaeval Arthurian Literary History,” *Medium Ævum*, 63 (1994), 3–6 [1–16]; Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, pp. 89–91; Moll, *Before Malory*, pp. 16–17; and my discussion below. See also Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 27–28, on a manuscript dated to the early fourteenth century (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12603) that blends the *Eneas* with Wace’s history.
- 10 See Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p. 541, on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 903; it is possible that the scribe is Jehan himself. Compare the inclusion of a *Roman de Troie en prose* in a fourteenth-century redaction of the *Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César*, noted by Catherine Croizy-Naquet, *Écrire l’histoire romaine au début du XIIIe siècle: L’“Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César” et les “Faits des Romains,”* Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age, 53 (Paris: Champion, 1999), p. 12.
- 11 See Lori J. Walters, “Wonders and Illuminations: Pierart dou Tielt and the *Queste del saint Graal*,” in *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature*, ed. Keith Busby (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 339–80, on the mid-fourteenth-century manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 5281, with her discussion of the ambiguities of its design. Compare the views of Fritz Peter Knapp, *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik: Sieben Studien und ein Nachwort*, Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997), pp. 150–51, and Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, pp. 90–91, on the inclusion in Codex Sangallensis 857 of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* and works regarded as historical.
- 12 See, e.g., Lister M. Matheson, “King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles,” in *King Arthur Through the Ages*, ed. Valerie M. Lagorio and

- Mildred Leake Day, 2 vols., Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 1269 and 1301 (New York: Garland, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 248–74, and Moll, *Before Malory*, pp. 21–22, 71–72, 157–231.
- 13 See Jehan Bodel, *La Chanson des Saisnes*, ed. Annette Brasseur, Textes littéraires français, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1989), lines 6–15 in redaction “AR.”
 - 14 Though Jehan’s classification is often cited, in my treatment of it here and below I am particularly indebted to the rich discussion in Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, pp. 138–40.
 - 15 An argument of this kind by Heinz Thomas is noted in Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, p. 235, n. 57.
 - 16 On the limits of Jehan’s classification for medieval English romance, see Rosalind Field, “Romance as History, History as Romance,” in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer–Boydell & Brewer, 1991), pp. 163–73, and Rosalind Field, “Romance in England, 1066–1400,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152–76 (including pp. 172–73, with n. 70).
 - 17 See the passages cited above in n. 3. On the role of more recent, Romantic theorizing in the development of the argument, see Robert M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 125–26.
 - 18 See Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik: Studien zur Form der frühen Artus- und Graldichtung*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, 97 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1956). A second edition was published in 1970; a French translation appeared in 1974.
 - 19 See Boutet, *Charlemagne et Arthur, ou le roi imaginaire*, Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age, 20 (Paris: Champion, and Geneva: Slatkine, 1992).
 - 20 See Baumgartner, *De l’histoire de Troie au livre du Graal: Le temps, le récit (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)*, Varia, 18 (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994).
 - 21 See Knapp, *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik*, cited above in n. 11, and Knapp, *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik (II): Zehn neue Studien und ein Vorwort*, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 35 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2005).
 - 22 See *Temps et histoire dans le roman arthurien*, studies collected by Jean-Claude Faucon, Collection Moyen Age (Toulouse: Editions Universitaires du Sud, 1999).
 - 23 See the citation above in n. 7.
 - 24 The heading draws of course on the title of Gabrielle M. Spiegel’s *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics, 23 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).
 - 25 See, for example, Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), and Field, “Romance in England,” cited above in n. 16.

- 26 See, for example, Jon Whitman, “Transfers of Empire, Movements of Mind: Holy Sepulchre and Holy Grail,” *MLN*, 123 (2008), 895–923.
- 27 See Jon Whitman, “Thinking Backward and Forward: Narrative Order and the Beginnings of Romance,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 4 (2006), 131–50. Contrast the more strictly “philosophic” approach to an *in medias res* opening in a commentary on the *Aeneid* composed earlier in the twelfth century, discussed in Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 110 and 240–41.

CHAPTER 2 FEARFUL HISTORIES: THE PAST CONTAINED IN THE ROMANCES OF ANTIQUITY

- 1 *Galteri de Castellione Alexandreis*, ed. Marvin L. Colker (Padua: Antenore, 1978); *Alexandreis: A Twelfth-century Epic*, trans. David Townsend (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2006). For a survey of the multifaceted Alexander traditions, see Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, *Les Romans d’Alexandre: Aux frontières de l’épique et du romanesque* (Paris: Champion, 1998).
- 2 Thomas of Kent, *Le Roman d’Alexandre ou le Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, ed. Brian Foster and Ian Short, modern French trans. Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Champion, 2003), lines 6559–60, p. 510: “Par iceo grant engin les ad fet estoper, / Qe eaux ne lur ligné ne puissent mes passer.” All translations from this work are my own.
- 3 Thomas of Kent, *Roman*, lines 6582–90.
- 4 Typical of a somewhat darker, considerably more nuanced recent view of the romances of antiquity is Zrinka Stahuljak, *Bloodless Genealogies of the French Middle Ages: Translatio, Kinship, and Metaphor* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), especially pp. 36–78.
- 5 See, for example, Christopher Baswell, “Marvels of Translation and Crises of Transition in the Romances of Antiquity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29–44.
- 6 Images and a virtual tour of the Ara Pacis in its current reconstruction, as well as general information, can be found at <http://en.arapacis.it/>. A fine website, with a wider range of images from many sources as well as an annotated bibliography, curated by Charles Rhyne, is at <http://cdm.reed.edu/ara-pacis/>. A rich recent survey of the Ara Pacis is Orietta Rossini, *Ara Pacis* (Rome: Comune di Roma, Assessorato alle Politiche Culturali, 2009).
- 7 See Peter Holliday, “Time, Ritual, and History in the Ara Pacis Augustae,” *The Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 542–57.
- 8 Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James G. Frazer, rev. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 253 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 53–55.
- 9 Some recent scholars have raised doubt whether it is Aeneas or Numa who is shown sacrificing on the external wall. This intriguing debate has no crucial impact, however, on the broader historical implications of the Ara Pacis,

- especially in its earlier twentieth-century reception, to which I turn later. See Paul Rehak, “Aeneas or Numa? Rethinking the Meaning of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*,” *The Art Bulletin*, 83 (2001), 190–208.
- 10 Holliday, “*Ara Pacis*,” 554.
 - 11 *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford University Press, 1969); *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (1971; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1981).
 - 12 *Aeneid*, trans. Mandelbaum, p. 11.
 - 13 *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle of the Kings of England*, trans. J. A. Giles (London: Bell and Sons, 1876), Book 11, ch. 10, p. 176.
 - 14 *Chronicle*, trans. Giles, Book 11, ch. 13, pp. 234–35.
 - 15 *Le Roman d’Eneas*, ed. and modern French trans. Aimé Petit (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1997). For an English translation, based on a different edition, see *Eneas: A Twelfth-Century French Romance*, trans. John A. Yunck (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).
 - 16 *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1911).
 - 17 Benoît de Ste-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, 6 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904–12), vol. 11, lines 14631–958 (pp. 375–95).
 - 18 For some other twelfth-century approaches to tombs and artistry, see [Chapter 4](#) of this volume.
 - 19 *Le Roman de Thèbes*, ed. and modern French trans. Francine Mora-Lebrun (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1995), lines 3235–72, 4300–85.
 - 20 Thomas of Kent, *Roman*, lines 3778–921.
 - 21 Thomas of Kent, *Roman*, lines 250–79.
 - 22 Walter, *Alexandreis*, 3.234–42; Thomas of Kent, *Roman*, *laisse* 101.
 - 23 Walter, *Alexandreis*, 4.6–10, 4.176–274; for medieval glosses, see pp. 413–22.
 - 24 For a fuller discussion, see, e.g., Aristotle Kallis, “‘Framing’ Romanità: The Celebrations for the *Bimillenario Augusteo* and the Augusteo-Ara Pacis Project,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46 (2011), 809–31.
 - 25 For images of the Piazza Augusto Imperatore in 1938 (with Morpurgo’s building) and today (with Richard Meier’s), as well as site plans, see the websites cited in note 6.
 - 26 Kallis, “‘Framing’ Romanità,” 824.

CHAPTER 3 TROY AND ROME, TWO NARRATIVE
PRESENTATIONS OF HISTORY IN THE THIRTEENTH
CENTURY: THE *ROMAN DE TROIE EN PROSE*
AND THE *FAITS DES ROMAINS*

- 1 Joachim Lecker, *Die Darstellung Cäsars in den romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, *Analecta Romanica*, 50 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1986). For the relatively marginal place given to the matter of Rome by *chansons de geste* and romances, see my article “César et le *romanz* au XII^e siècle,” in *Entre Moyen Age et Renaissance, Regards croisés sur Jules César*, *Cahiers*

- de Recherches Médiévales, 13, ed. Bernard Ribémont and Bruno Méniel (Paris: Champion, 2006), pp. 39–50.
- 2 *Li fet des Romains, compilé ensemble de Saluste et de Suetoine et de Lucan: Texte du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Louis-Fernand Flutre and Karl Sneyders de Vogel, 2 vols. (Paris: Droz, and Groningen: Wolters, 1937–38; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1977). Unless otherwise indicated, citations of pages from this work (cited below as *Faits des Romains*) refer to volume 1.
 - 3 Marc-René Jung, *La légende de Troie en France au Moyen Age. Analyse des versions françaises et bibliographie raisonnée des manuscrits*, Romanica Helvetica, 114 (Basel: Francke, 1996), pp. 440–84. The text has been edited only in part: *Le Roman de Troie en prose* [manuscript B.N.F. 1612], ed. Léopold Constans and Edmond Faral, Classiques français du Moyen Age, 29, vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 1922). For the unedited part, I rely on the transcription prepared by Françoise Vieliard, to whom I am indebted.
 - 4 Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, Société des anciens textes français, 6 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904–12). The work has been edited and translated in part in *Le Roman de Troie: extraits du manuscrit Milan, Bibliothèque ambrosienne, D 55*, ed. and trans. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Françoise Vieliard (Paris: Livre de poche, 1998).
 - 5 Cf. Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier, 1987), pp. 147–48. Among numerous works written on the subject, see also *Le Temps, sa mesure et sa perception au Moyen Age*, ed. Bernard Ribémont (Caen: Paradigme, 1992), and *Dire et penser le temps au Moyen Age: frontières de l'histoire et du roman*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2005).
 - 6 Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983–85), vol. III, *Le temps raconté*, pp. 147–83.
 - 7 The death of his father when Caesar was sixteen years old is also mentioned (p. 8, l. 11).
 - 8 For the nature of these sources and their collation, see my *Écrire l'histoire romaine au début du XIII^e siècle: L'“Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César” et les “Faits des Romains,”* Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age, 53 (Paris: Champion, 1999), pp. 67–125.
 - 9 Françoise Autrand, “Les dates, la mémoire et les juges,” in *Le Métier d'historien au Moyen Age. Études sur l'historiographie médiévale*, ed. Bernard Guenée (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1977), p. 171 [157–82].
 - 10 *Faits des Romains*, pp. 79–344. See especially the very detailed succession of moments on pp. 110–15, which narrate the war against Ariovistus: “the following day” [*l'endemain*] (p. 112, l. 16); “right before noon” [*jusque vers midi*] (p. 112, l. 19); “just before sunset” [*jusque vers soleil esconsant*] (p. 112, l. 24); “in the evening” [*au soir*] (p. 112, l. 26); “before the moon first appeared” [*devant prime lune*] (p. 112, l. 32); “three days thereafter” [*au tierz jor après*] (p. 112); and so on. Mistakes are rare: in chapter 11 of the first part (p. 75), the author seems to have missed the date and circumstances provided by Suetonius, which are in any case unclear (cf. *Faits des Romains*, vol. II, p. 86). He can

- also be more precise than the Latin, for example in rendering Caesar's "*tertia ferme vigilia*" [about the third watch; iv, 23] as "about midnight" [*entor mienuit*] (p. 168, l. 16).
- 11 See, for example, "the rest of that winter" [*le remenant de cel yver*] (p. 157, l. 9); "three years" [*trois ans*] for the reign of the king of Autricum (Chartres) (p. 191, l. 24); "nearly three whole months" [*pres de trois mois entiers*] for the siege of the temple in Jerusalem (p. 69, l. 29); "the last six days" [*touz les VI jors arriere*] for the retreat of Cicero's troops (p. 233, l. 39); "more than six long hours" [*plus de VI hores continuels*] for an attack (p. 138, l. 21).
 - 12 Dares, *De excidio Trojae historia*, ed. F. Meister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873). The other Latin source is Dictys, *Ephemeridos belli Troiani*, ed. W. Eisenhut (Leipzig: Teubner, 1973). These two works are available in French translation in *Récits inédits sur la guerre de Troie*, trans. Gérard Frye (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998).
 - 13 A good example is found at the end of § 36: "but let us now leave that to be told . . . and return to our matter [*et retournerons sor nostre matiere*], which is to relate how the Trojans who had escaped made do after their city had been destroyed."
 - 14 See the way in which Caesar's journey with the warrior Amyclas is organized according to the interplay of day and night: "night had gone by and the day was brightening" [*la nuit s'escola, li jors s'esclarssi*] (p. 470, lines 29–30); "but when night was beginning to fall" [*mes quant vint al anuitier*] (p. 471, l. 4); "afterwards, day came again; the sun rose" [*puis que ce revint le jor au soleil levant*] (p. 471, l. 8). Cf. the same temporal notations in *Prose 1*: "after the moon had risen" [*après ce que la lune fust levee*] (p. 20, § 26); "and when the sun began to spread its rays" [*et quant le soleil commencha a espandre*] (p. 21, § 28); "when midnight came" [*quant vint entor la mie nuit*] (p. 40, § 55).
 - 15 *Faits des Romains*, pp. 593–613. See my article "Un modèle de transposition: l'imaginaire oriental dans les *Faits des Romains*," *PRIS-MA*, 26 (1997), 157–67.
 - 16 See R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (University of Chicago Press, 1983). See also Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography," in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 99–110.
 - 17 This genealogy is also given elliptically for the generations between Shem and Tros, and between Tros and Laomedon: "And passing from heir to heir, there came the time of the reign of King Laomedon, who was Priam's father" [*Et tant ala puis d'oir en oir que Laomedon en fu roi, qui peres Priant*] (p. 3, § 2 bis). The sources of the episode of Laodamanta are difficult to identify: cf. Jung, *La légende de Troie*, pp. 440–42.
 - 18 The text also makes mention of "Aurelius who was of Orestes' lineage" (p. 22, lines 11–12). The most interesting genealogy is that of Drappes Brenno the Gaul, which Caesar himself specifies and which is confirmed by the passing on of the sword that had belonged to the first Brennus (pp. 316–17).
 - 19 *Faits des Romains*, pp. 62–66. See also vol. 11, p. 81, for the sources of this passage and the modifications made by the compiler.

- 20 Cf. my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, p. 163.
- 21 For this detail, see *Faits des Romains*, vol. II, p. 64.
- 22 For the rewriting of the sources, see especially Alice Planche, "Les ruines de Troie (*Les Faits des Romains*)," *Bien dire et bien apprendre*, 10 (1992), 129–36.
- 23 *Faits des Romains*, p. 621, lines 32ff; p. 15, lines 24–26; and p. 16, lines 1–4. See my essay "Alexandre et César dans les *Faits des Romains*," in *The Medieval French Alexander*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 161–74.
- 24 This formula is present in both works: mostly in the first part of the *Deeds of the Romans* (some one dozen occurrences) and throughout *Prose 1*. It is used to designate the Roman and Trojan pasts in relation to the writing being carried out in the present.
- 25 Roger Chartier, *Au bord de la falaise. L'histoire entre certitudes et inquiétude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), p. 165.
- 26 Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1975), p. III.
- 27 Cf. Louis-Fernand Flutre, *Les manuscrits des "Faits des Romains"* (Paris: Hachette, [1932]).
- 28 For the treatment of the sources, see my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 85–115.
- 29 This work has been edited by Jung, *La légende de Troie*, pp. 358–430.
- 30 Roland Barthes, "Le discours de l'histoire," *Information sur les Sciences Sociales*, 6 (1967), 65–75.
- 31 Cf. my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 115–24.
- 32 For example, when he condemns flatterers [*losengiers*]: "Therefore I pray Our Lord that such people should be judged in like manner before their death" [*Por coi je depri Nostre Saignor que tel maniere de gens puissent avant lor mort esprover semblable jugement*] (§ 127).
- 33 For these relations between the past and the present, see, for example, the analysis of Chartier, *Au bord de la falaise*, especially pp. 161ff.
- 34 In the wake of universal histories in Latin (one of whose models is Petrus Comestor's *Historia ecclesiastica*). Cf. Jung's explanation, *La légende de Troie*, p. 334.
- 35 See my article "Le *Roman de Troie* en prose et le monde païen antique," in *Soi-même et l'autre*, Études Médiévales, 4 (Amiens: Presses du Centre d'Études Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie-Jules Verne, 2002), pp. 197–205.
- 36 See my article "Les retours dans le *Roman de Troie* de Benoît de Sainte Maure et dans le *Roman de Troie en prose*," in *Conter de Troie et d'Alexandre*, studies collected by Laurence Harf-Lancner, Laurence Mathey-Maille, and Michelle Szkilnik (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006), pp. 195–213.
- 37 See Jeanette M. A. Beer, "A Medieval Cato – Virtus or Virtue?," *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 52–59, and my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 165ff.
- 38 For this factor, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Social Change and Literary Language: The Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth-Century French Historiography," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 17 (1987), 129–48; rpt. in *The Past as Text*, cited above in n. 16, pp. 178–94. See also her article "De l'oral à l'écrit: la sémantique sociale de la prose française au XIII^e siècle," in *Histoire*

- et société: mélanges offerts à Georges Duby*, 4 vols. (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1992), vol. iv, *La mémoire, l'écriture et l'histoire*, pp. 21–28.
- 39 Cf. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 172ff; Jeanette M. A. Beer, *A Medieval Caesar*, *Études de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 30 (Geneva: Droz, 1976), pp. 156ff.
- 40 See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *L'Ombre des ancêtres. Essai sur l'imaginaire médiéval de la parenté* ([Paris]: Fayard, 2000). Cf. my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 179ff.
- 41 He even interpolates a contemporary affair: “Whenever I recall this matter, I deem the English and the Normans to be foolish [*je tieng por fox et Anglois et Normanz*]; for they have vain hopes in believing that Otto the excommunicated [Otto IV, excommunicated by Pope Innocent III in June 1210], whom God and Holy Church have set aside, could invade France with such people” (p. 365, lines 6–11).
- 42 Cf. David L. Hull, “In Defense of Presentism,” *History and Theory*, 18 (1979), 1–15. See also François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* ([Paris]: Seuil, 2003).
- 43 See the fertile debates surrounding the fictionalist notions of the linguistic turn, especially the works of Hayden White, such as *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), and, among others, the analysis of Chartier, *Au bord de la falaise*, pp. 102ff.
- 44 See Spiegel, “Social Change and Literary Language,” 191. See also Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Le récit médiéval: XIIe–XIIIe siècles*, *Contours littéraires* (Paris: Hachette, 1995), pp. 71ff.
- 45 For Benoît’s aesthetics, see Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman. Les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Lille: Atelier national Reproduction des thèses, Université Lille III; Paris: Champion; Geneva: Slatkine, 1985). See also my *Thèbes, Troie et Carthage, Poétique de la ville dans le roman antique au XII^e siècle*, *Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge*, 30 (Paris: Champion, 1994).
- 46 See my article “La description de Troie et ses avatars dans le *Roman de Troie en prose* du XIII^e siècle,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 39 (1996), 303–20.
- 47 Guy Raynaud de Lage, “Du *Roman de Troie* de Benoît de Sainte-Maure au *Roman de Troie* en prose,” in *The French Language: Studies Presented to Lewis Charles Harmer*, ed. T. G. S. Combe and P. Rickard (London: Harrap, 1970), pp. 175–82.
- 48 See my article “Traces de l’épique dans l’historiographie au XIII^e siècle,” in *Palimpsestes épiques. Réécritures et interférences génériques*, coordinated by Dominique Boutet and Camille Esmein-Sarrazin (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006), pp. 203–16.
- 49 For the form and contents of these moralizations, see my article “Le *Roman de Troie* en prose,” cited above in n. 35, pp. 200–2.

- 50 See my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 191ff.
- 51 See *Le Roman de Troie en prose*, § 321: “the end of the war was terribly cruel, and it seemed that Our Lord hated them one and all [*haist trestous*]. For while it is indeed true that justice was on the side of the Trojans (as you have heard), and injustice on the side of the Greeks, Our Lord allowed that they would all be annihilated owing to their wicked beliefs” [*si souffry Nostre Sire par leur mauvaise creance qu'ilz feussent destruits*].
- 52 This morality of action is advocated by, among other people, Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. See Gilbert Dahan, “*Ex imperfecto ad perfectum*. Le progrès de la pensée humaine chez les théologiens du XIII^e siècle,” in *Progrès, réaction, décadence dans l'Occident médiéval*, studies collected by Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Geneva: Droz, 2003), pp. 171–84.
- 53 The appeals to the audience's attention take diverse forms – “see this fine beginning” [*veez ci beau commencement*] (§ 68); “there you may see” [*illueques poés veoir*] (§ 89); “as you will hear” [*si com vos orrés*] (§ 90); and so on (not to mention the formula “you would have seen” [*la veïssiez*], § 93, 105, 117, etc.) – which could signify orality but which also supply internal cohesiveness to the narrative.
- 54 For this issue, see Michel Meyer, *Questionnement et historicité* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000).
- 55 For the audience, first within the universities, then among the aristocracy in general, see Bernard Guenée, “La culture historique des nobles: le succès des *Faits des Romains* (XIII^e–XV^e siècles),” in *La noblesse au Moyen Age, XI^e–XV^e siècles. Essais à la mémoire de Robert Boutruche*, ed. Philippe Contamine (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 261–88. See the more nuanced position of Gabrielle M. Spiegel, who leans towards an audience that was aristocratic from the start, in *Romancing the Past*, p. 120. On the necessary links between history and fiction, see, for example, Krzysztof Pomian, “Histoire et fiction,” *Le Débat*, 54 (1989), p. 137 [114–37].
- 56 André Burguière, “De la compréhension en histoire,” *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 45 (1990), p. 123 [123–36]: “*l'art de concilier la mise en évidence du sens et la fidélité au vécu, l'art de faire revivre et de faire comprendre tout à la fois.*”
- 57 See my article “L'histoire romaine, entre vers et prose: les *Faits des Romains* et les *Empereurs de Rome* de Calendre,” in *Écrire en vers, écrire en prose. Une poétique de la révélation*, studies collected by Catherine Croizy-Naquet, vol. 11 of *Littérature et révélation*, Littérales, 45 (Nanterre: Centre des sciences de la littérature française de l'Université Paris X-Nanterre, 2007), pp. 155–72.
- 58 See my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 204ff.
- 59 See my *Écrire l'Histoire romaine*, pp. 252ff.
- 60 *Faits des Romains*, pp. 79–80: “France was very great at the time of Julius Caesar” [*France estoit molt granz au tens Juilles Cesar*]. This more or less explicit paralleling leads the author to transpose proper names and to commit errors of location (vol. 11, p. 87).
- 61 Régine Robin, “L'Histoire saisie, dessaisie par la littérature?,” *EspacesTemps*, 59/60/61 (1995), 56–65.

- 62 For a different interpretation, see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, p. 182.
- 63 Louis-Fernand Flutre, “*Li Fait des Romains*” dans les littératures française et italienne du XIIIe au XVIe siècle (Paris: Hachette, 1932). See also my “Les faits des Romains, une fortune diverse,” *Anabases. Traditions et réception de l’Antiquité*, 4 (2006), 141–54.

CHAPTER 4 INESCAPABLE HISTORY: GEOFFREY
OF MONMOUTH’S *HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF BRITAIN*
AND ARTHURIAN ROMANCES OF THE TWELFTH
AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

- 1 My translation. All Latin quotations from, and references to, *HRB* follow the “Vulgate” text, as represented in *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth: I. A Single-Manuscript Edition from Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 568*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), cited as W. (section/page). Translations, unless otherwise indicated, are from Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), cited as T. (page), although I have made minor adjustments in a number of passages.
- 2 See Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), chapter 5; R. William Leckie, Jr., *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (University of Toronto Press, 1981); and Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
- 3 See Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (University of Chicago Press, 1977), and Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).
- 4 See Robert M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 2; Francis Ingledew, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*” and the Order of the Garter (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 4; and Ingledew, “The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*,” *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 665–704.
- 5 Georges Duby, “Youth in Aristocratic Society,” chapter 7 of *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Poston (London: Edward Arnold, 1977). See also Sandra Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Rereadings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 2, “*Li Bachelier*”; and, for an example of the kind of trouble stirred up by impetuous *iuvenes* between William the Conqueror and his son Robert Curthose, see Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, vol. III (Oxford University Press, 1972), book v, chapter 10.
- 6 Geoffrey is presumably responding here, and elsewhere in *HRB*, to the unwillingness of many of Henry I’s barons to accept his daughter Matilda as their queen after Henry’s death, despite his express desire that they do so.

- 7 See Robert W. Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 53–60.
- 8 See Judith A. Green, *The Government of England Under Henry I* (Cambridge University Press, 1986); Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 168–81, 329–39.
- 9 See Ralph Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); R. W. Southern, “King Henry I,” in *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), pp. 206–33.
- 10 See Linda M. Georgianna, “Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*: Lessons in Self-Fashioning for the Bastards of Britain,” in *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Sally McKee (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 3–25.
- 11 On *ingenium* (French *engin*) as an important virtue in twelfth-century French romances, see Hanning, *Individual*, pp. 105–38; on Merlin (and this episode), see Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke, “Profiting from the Past: History as Symbolic Capital in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*,” *Arthurian Literature*, 12 (1993), 28–35 [1–35].
- 12 *Le roman de Brut de Wace*, ed. Ivor Arnold, 2 vols. (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1938, 1940), cited by line number; translation by Judith Weiss, *Wace’s Roman de Brut. A History of the British: Text and Translation* (University of Exeter Press, 1999, including Arnold’s French text). See Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100–1300* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 137–70.
- 13 On this and other manuscripts that combine texts of romance with texts presented as historical writing, see [Chapter 1](#) of this volume.
- 14 *Cligès*, ed. Alexandre Micha, *Classiques français du Moyen Age*, 84 (Paris: Champion, 1957), cited by line number; trans. William Kibler, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances* (London: Penguin, 1991), cited as K. On *Tristan* connections, see, e.g., Anthime Fourier, *Le courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au moyen-âge*, vol. 1, *Les débuts (XIIe siècle)* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1960), pp. 124–54, and Lucie Polak, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1982), pp. 50–69.
- 15 The *locus classicus* of the argument that intention, more than action, is the touchstone for sinfulness is Peter Abelard, *Ethics (Scito te ipsum)*. See *Peter Abelard’s “Ethics,”* ed. and trans. D. E. Luscombe (Oxford University Press, 1971); Luscombe’s “Introduction,” xiii–xxxvii, discusses and contextualizes Abelard’s position.
- 16 For discussions of the echoes of twelfth-century dynastic politics in Alis’ matrimonial plans, see Fourier, *Le courant réaliste*, pp. 160–74, and Polak, *Cligès*, pp. 9–21.
- 17 See Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series, 74 (New York: Pantheon, 1965), chapter 3, and Sarah Kay, “Courts, Clerks, and Courtly

- Love,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 81–96.
- 18 On Jehan, see Peter Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in “Cligès” and “Perceval”* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), pp. 98–102; Robert W. Hanning, “Poetic Emblems in Medieval Narrative Texts,” in *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lois Ebin, Studies in Medieval Culture, 16 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984), pp. 13–19 [1–32]. On Thessala, see Hanning, “‘Ut enim faber . . . sic creator’: Divine Creation as Context for Human Creativity in the Twelfth Century,” in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle*, ed. Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 5 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984), pp. 126–28 [95–149].
- 19 See D. D. R. Owen, “Profanity and its Purpose in Chrétien’s *Cligès* and *Lancelot*,” in *Arthurian Romance: Seven Essays*, ed. D. D. R. Owen (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1970), pp. 40–42, 46–48 [37–48]; R. W. Hanning, “Courtly Contexts for Urban *Cultus*: Responses to Ovid in Chrétien’s *Cligès* and Marie’s *Guigemar*,” *Symposium*, 35 (1981), 39–43 [34–56]; and Hanning, “‘I shal finde it in a maner glose’: Versions of Textual Harassment in Medieval Literature,” in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 39–40 [27–50] (on the Salernitan doctors as would-be exegetes as well as stand-ins for the torturers of Christ’s Passion).
- 20 Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton University Press, 1979).
- 21 The text used is *The Romance of Fergus*, ed. Wilson Frescoln (Philadelphia: William H. Allen, 1983), cited by line number; trans. D. D. R. Owen, *Fergus of Galloway: Knight of King Arthur* (London: Dent, 1991). See Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance: The Verse Tradition from Chrétien to Froissart*, trans. Margaret and Roger Middleton, with a foreword by Keith Busby (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 158–69, 251–67; and for context, see Arthur’s conquest of the Scots, *HRB*: W. 148–50/104–6; Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*, chapters 1, 2, and 6; Warren, *History on the Edge*, chapters 1 and 2.
- 22 *Erec et Enide*, ed. Mario Roques, *Classiques français du Moyen Âge*, 80 (Paris: Champion, 1952), l. 65.
- 23 See Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment*, chapter 2, “Li Bachelier.”
- 24 *Romancing the Past*, pp. 2–3. See also Robert W. Hanning, “Arthurian Evangelists: The Language of Truth in Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances,” *Philological Quarterly*, 64 (1985), 347–65.
- 25 *La mort le roi Artu*, ed. Jean Frappier (1936; rpt. Geneva: Droz, 1959), 4/4 (Guinevere); 158/204 (Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain). All textual citations follow this edition, giving section/page; English translations from James Cable, trans., *The Death of King Arthur* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), which presents in brackets the section numbers that appear in Frappier’s edition.
- 26 Among the many other references to Fortune’s power: Arthur’s lament over the newly dead Gawain (172/221), and Sagremor’s comment to Arthur, who

has just witnessed Mordred slaying Yvain, “My Lord, such are the tricks of Fortune; now you can see that she is making you pay very dearly for the great prosperity and honour that you used to have . . .” (190/243).

27 This is not Gawain’s brother Gaheriet, the Gaheris of Malory’s work.

28 On intention, see [note 15](#), above.

CHAPTER 5 GOTTFRIED, WOLFRAM, AND THE ANGEVINS: HISTORY, GENEALOGY, AND FICTION IN THE *TRISTAN* AND *PARZIVAL* ROMANCES

- 1 Bernd Ulrich Hucker, *Otto IV. Der wiederentdeckte Kaiser. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2003), pp. 296–335. For a concise summary of previous scholarship on Wolfram and the social and political context of *Parzival*, which seems never to have remarked on the probable feudal link between Wolfram and the count of Loon and Rieneck, see Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. with a commentary by Eberhard Nellmann, trans. Dieter Kühn, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), vol. II, pp. 413–16.
- 2 Hucker, *Otto IV.*, pp. 371–85.
- 3 Patrick Sims-Williams, “Did Itinerant Breton *Conteurs* Transmit the *Matière de Bretagne*?” *Romania*, 116 (1998), 99–100 [72–111].
- 4 Adrian Stevens, “History, Fable and Love: Gottfried, Thomas, and the Matter of Britain,” in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s “Tristan,”* ed. Will Hasty (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2003), pp. 223–56.
- 5 Hucker, *Otto IV.*, pp. 22–36.
- 6 On Gervase and Otto IV, see Gervase of Tilbury, “*Otia Imperialia*”: *Recreation for an Emperor*, ed. and trans. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. xxv–lxiii.
- 7 On the importance of genealogy in *Parzival* and other vernacular Grail romances, see Elisabeth Schmid, *Familiengeschichten und Heilsmythologie: Die Verwandtschaftsstrukturen in den französischen und deutschen Gralromanen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986).
- 8 See Martin Aurell, *L’Empire des Plantagenêt, 1154–1224* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), pp. 148–77, and Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur, 550–1250* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), pp. 165–209.
- 9 Geoffrey of Monmouth, “*The History of the Kings of Britain*”: *An Edition and Translation of “De gestis Britonum” [Historia regum Britanniae]*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright, *Arthurian Studies*, 69 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), introduction, p. vii; Aurell, *L’Empire*, pp. 109–13; Jean Favier, *Les Plantagenêts: origines et destins d’un empire, IXe–XIVe siècles* (Poitiers: Fayard, 2004), pp. 459–60.
- 10 Aurell, *L’Empire*, p. 102; *Wace’s Roman de Brut. A History of the British: Text and Translation*, Judith Weiss, rev. edn. (University of Exeter Press, 2002), introduction, pp. xi–xiii.
- 11 See Aurell, *L’Empire*, pp. 168–69.

- 12 Aurell, *L'Empire*, p. 167.
- 13 Aurell, *L'Empire*, p. 166, points out that by claiming possession of the swords, Richard and John were implicitly claiming to possess the virtues of Arthur and Tristan.
- 14 Aurell, *L'Empire*, p. 167.
- 15 Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isold*, ed. and trans. Walter Haug and Manfred Günter Scholz, 2 vols. (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2011).
- 16 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 36–196.
- 17 See Danny Danziger and John Gillingham, *1215: The Year of Magna Carta* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2003), p. 252.
- 18 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 22–57.
- 19 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 127–39.
- 20 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 403–10; Georges Duby, *Le dimanche de Bouvines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Danziger and Gillingham, *1215*, pp. 153–168.
- 21 For a useful summary of scholarship on Gottfried and his historical and cultural context, see *Tristan und Isold*, ed. and trans. Haug and Scholz, vol. 11, pp. 207–13.
- 22 Sims-Williams, “Breton *Conteurs*,” 99–100.
- 23 For the most comprehensive account of Foliot, see Adrian Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and His Letters* (Cambridge University Press, 1965); on Foliot and Robert of Gloucester, see pp. 142–43 of this work.
- 24 Morey and Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot*, pp. 156–62; for Foliot’s use of the *Historia regum Britanniae* to support his claim that London had a historic right to metropolitan status, see *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, vol. 11 (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 666–73.
- 25 For a fuller treatment of the use of Wace as an intertext in Thomas’s and Gottfried’s romances, see Stevens, “History, Fable and Love.”
- 26 *The Saga of Tristram and Isönd*, trans. Paul Schach (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 4.
- 27 See Georges Duby, “Remarques sur la littérature généalogique dans la France du Nord aux XIe et XIIe siècles,” in Georges Duby, *Hommes et structures du Moyen Age*, vol. 1, *La société chevaleresque* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), pp. 167–80.
- 28 Duby, “Remarques sur la littérature généalogique,” p. 178.
- 29 For a comprehensive and exhaustively documented treatment of the interaction between genealogy and literary narrative in the Middle Ages, see Ursula Peters, *Dynastengeschichte und Verwandtschaftsbilder: Die Adelsfamilie in der volkssprachigen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999).
- 30 *Roman de Brut*, 1175–80; *Otia imperialia*, 1.23, pp. 148–49; 11.10, pp. 306–7; 11.14, pp. 354–55; 11.17, pp. 398–99.
- 31 For a fuller treatment of Gottfried’s rewriting of history in the cave of lovers episode, see Stevens, “History, Fable and Love,” pp. 250–53.
- 32 For some perspectives on versions of historical progression in Grail romance, see my discussion below and [Chapter 6](#) of this volume.
- 33 For these passages, see *Otia*, 11.18, pp. 434–35 (“*Anglos e Germania uenientes, tunc Saxones dictos . . . ex quorum stirpe ab utroque parente, princeps serenissime, descendisti, patrem habens illustrem Henricum ducem Saxonie, auum uero per*”).

- matrem illustrissimum regem Anglorum Henricum*”), and *Otia*, II.16, pp. 396–97 (“*a tua Saxonia reges Anglorum cum ipsis Anglis processerunt*”).
- 34 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 314–17.
 - 35 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 286–313; on the literary representation of imperial politics at the court of Otto IV in the period leading up to the battle of Bouvines, see also John W. Baldwin, “‘Once there was an emperor . . .’: A Political Reading of the Romances of Jean Renart,” in *Jean Renart and the Art of Romance: Essays on “Guillaume de Dole,”* ed. Nancy Vine Gurling (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), pp. 45–82.
 - 36 On the use of genealogy in *Parzival* and the *Conte du Graal*, see Peters, *Dynastengeschichte und Verwandtschaftsbilder*, pp. 292–309.
 - 37 See the detailed commentary on Gahmuret’s genealogy at 56.1 ff. in *Parzival*, ed. Nellmann, vol. II, pp. 483–86; also *Wolframs von Eschenbach Parzival und Titurel*, ed. Ernst Martin, vol. II, *Kommentar* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1903), p. xlii.
 - 38 On the Middle High German name forms “Anschevin” and “Anschouwe,” see the commentary in *Parzival*, ed. Nellmann, vol. II, p. 456.
 - 39 On genealogy, narrative, and the ideology of nobility, see Duby, “Remarques sur la littérature généalogique,” p. 178.
 - 40 On this passage and its wider implications, see Adrian Stevens, “Fiction, Plot and Discourse: Wolfram’s *Parzival* and its Narrative Sources,” in *A Companion to Wolfram’s “Parzival,”* ed. Will Hasty (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge: Camden House, 1999), pp. 99–123.
 - 41 For a full account of the relationship between fictional and historical genealogy in *Parzival*, see Helen J. Nicholson, *Love, War, and the Grail: Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights in Medieval Epic and Romance 1150–1500* (2001; rpt. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), pp. 102–50.
 - 42 Wolfram’s *Parzival* is generally dated c. 1200–1210. But if the “princess of Brabant” is taken as a reference to Maria of Brabant, the Loherangrin episode cannot have been written before May 1214, and Wolfram may well have added it to celebrate her marriage to Otto and to present their union as an enhancement of the Angevin dynasty.
 - 43 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 371–85.
 - 44 See Joachim Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz – Priester Johannes – Loherangrin: Der offene Schluß des *Parzival*,” *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift*, 65 (1991), 236–64, esp. 255–64.
 - 45 On the medieval *chansons de geste* and romances of the swan knight, see Peters, *Dynastengeschichte und Verwandtschaftsbilder*, pp. 197–207.
 - 46 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 381–85.
 - 47 See Martin, *Kommentar*, pp. xl–xlii; Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 382–85, details Otto’s close connections with the Templars and shows him as a significant benefactor of their order.
 - 48 On the Grail, the Temple, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and Jerusalem, see G. Ronald Murphy, *Gemstone of Paradise: The Holy Grail in Wolfram’s “Parzival”* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

- 49 On the presentation of Prester John in *Parzival*, see Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 244–52; *Parzival*, ed. Nellmann, vol. II, pp. 785–86.
- 50 Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 244–55.
- 51 Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 247–55.
- 52 Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 256.
- 53 Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 261–64; *Parzival*, ed. Nellmann, vol. II, pp. 786–88.
- 54 Hucker, *Otto IV*, pp. 196–201; see also David Wells, “Imperial Sanctity and Political Reality: Bible, Liturgy, and the Ambivalence of Symbol in Walther von der Vogelweide’s Songs under Otto IV,” *Speculum*, 53 (1979), 479–510.
- 55 Bumke, “Parzival und Feirefiz,” 244–46; “Medieval Sourcebook: Otto of Freising: The Legend of Prester John,” <http://fordham.edu/halsall/source/otto-prester.html>.
- 56 On the connection between crusading, the office of emperor, and the millenarian expectations of Christian rule associated with Otto’s reign, see Hucker, *Otto IV*, p. 196.

CHAPTER 6 FICTIONAL HISTORY AS IDEOLOGY: FUNCTIONS OF THE GRAIL LEGEND FROM ROBERT DE BORON TO THE *ROMAN DE PERCEFOREST*

- 1 Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik: Studien zur Form der frühen Artus- und Graldichtung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1956); 3rd edn., 2002; French translation: *L’aventure chevaleresque: Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois. Études sur la forme des plus anciens poèmes d’Arthur et du Graal*, trans. Éliane Kaufholz (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).
- 2 “Probleme der Geschichtskonstruktion im arthurischen Roman,” in *Hochmittelalterliches Geschichtsbewusstsein im Spiegel nichthistoriographischer Quellen*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), pp. 341–56.
- 3 “Temps et histoire dans la littérature arthurienne,” in *Temps et histoire dans le roman arthurien*, coordinated by Jean-Claude Faucon (Toulouse: Editions Universitaires du Sud, 1999), pp. 9–31.
- 4 “Ein Evangelium für Ritter: *La Queste del Saint Graal* und die *Estoire dou Graal* von Robert de Boron,” *Speculum Medii Aevi*, 3 (1997), 53–64.
- 5 Gerhard von dem Borne, *Der Gral in Europa: Wurzeln und Wirkungen*, 2nd edn. (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1982; new edn., Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987).
- 6 Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature* (Lausanne: L’Age d’homme, 1982).
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 8 See “Temps et histoire,” p. 31.
- 9 Brigitte Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes’s “Conte du Graal”* (Stanford University Press, 1996).
- 10 Cf. William A. Nitze, *Perceval and the Holy Grail: An Essay on the Romance of Chrétien de Troyes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), p. 309: “But, I think, the filiation is quite clear. The French poet was not concerned

- primarily with Eastern material [i.e., “the Byzantine side of the question,” p. 308]. His grail is only superficially Christian. Its real source is Celtic, as is the sword which the Fisher King hands the hero. Chrétien’s whole setting for the Grail episode has analogs in Ireland, not specifically in the Orient.” As for the sacralization, we have seen that Nitze assumes Byzantine influence, which helps him to minimize the overtly heterodox traits of the Grail imagery. These have been interpreted by the Italian scholar Leonardo Olschki as a mirror of Catharic rites; see *The Grail Castle and Its Mysteries* (Manchester University Press, 1966, translated from the Italian original, 1961).
- 11 Pauline Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the “Queste del Saint Graal”* (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
 - 12 F. W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth-Century French Romance* (Stanford University Press, 1960). Locke has interpreted the *Queste* as a liturgical drama based on the “pattern of expectation and fulfilment” (p. 36).
 - 13 Kurt Ruh, “Joachitische Spiritualität im Werke Roberts von Boron,” in *Typologia litterarum: Festschrift für Max Wehrli*, ed. Stefan Sonderegger, Alois M. Haas, and Harald Burger (Zürich and Freiburg: Atlantis, 1969), pp. 167–96.
 - 14 Klaus Speckenbach, “Endzeiterwartung im ‘Lancelot-Gral-Zyklus’: Zur Problematik des Joachitischen Einflusses auf den Prosaroman,” in *Geistliche Denkformen in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Klaus Grubmüller, Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand, and Klaus Speckenbach (Munich: Fink, 1984), pp. 221–25 [210–25].
 - 15 Robert de Boron, *Le Roman du Saint-Graal*, trans. Monica Schöler-Beinhauer, *Klassische Texte des Romanischen Mittelalters*, 18 (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1981).
 - 16 See Helen Adolf, *Visio Pacis. Holy City and Grail: An Attempt at an Inner History of the Grail Legend* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1960).
 - 17 Hans Bayer, *Gral: Die hochmittelalterliche Glaubenskrisis im Spiegel der Literatur*, 2 vols., *Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 28 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1983).
 - 18 Albert Pauphilet, *Etudes sur la “Queste del Saint Graal” attribuée à Gautier Map* ([1921]; rpt. Paris: Champion, 1968), p. 71.
 - 19 Myrrha Lot-Borodine, “Autour du Saint-Graal, II,” *Romania*, 57 (1931), 199 [147–205]: “terrain de fraternité apostolique qui n’a rien d’un idéal guerrier.”
 - 20 Francesco Zambon, *Robert de Boron e i segreti del Graal*, *Biblioteca dell’ “Archivum Romanicum”* (Florence: Olschki, 1984).
 - 21 R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (University of Chicago Press, 1983).
 - 22 Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
 - 23 See William A. Nitze, “Messire Robert de Boron: Enquiry and Summary,” *Speculum*, 28 (1953), pp. 279–96.
 - 24 *Gral in Europa*, cited above in n. 5, p. 246f.

- 25 Alexandre Micha, *Étude sur le "Merlin" de Robert de Boron: Roman du XIII^e siècle*, Publications romanes et françaises, 151 (Geneva: Droz, 1980), p. 231.
- 26 *L'Estoire del Saint Graal* has been edited by Jean-Paul Ponceau, 2 vols., Les Classiques français du Moyen Age, 120–21 (Paris: Champion, 1997).
- 27 "Comment le lignage des rois bretons ne gagnerait-il pas en lustre par une origine orientale?" See *Le Livre du Graal*, ed. Daniel Poirion, pub. under the direction of Philippe Walter, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), vol. 1, p. 1670. The *Joseph d'Arimathie* forms the first part of this edition.
- 28 See "La symbolique de la nef de Salomon" in the *Joseph d'Arimathie* section, *ibid.*, p. 281.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 537: "mesire Robert de Boron qui ceste estoire translata de latin en romans."
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 556: "bon eüré Chevalier qui mist a fin les aventures del Saint Graal et de la Grant Bretagne."
- 31 See Michelle Szkilnik, *L'Archipel du Graal: Etude de l'"Estoire del Saint Graal"*, Publications romanes et françaises, 196 (Geneva: Droz, 1991).
- 32 See *The High Book of the Grail: A Translation of the Thirteenth-century Romance of "Perlesvaus"*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978), introduction.
- 33 J. Neale Carman, "The Symbolism of the *Perlesvaus*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 61 (1946), 42 [42–83].
- 34 In her well-documented book *Le sujet et la mort dans "La Mort Artu"* (Saint-Genouph: Nizet, 2002) Virginie Greene has underlined this personal consistency of the hero.
- 35 *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. Albert Pauphilet, Les Classiques français du Moyen Age, 33 (1923; rpt. Paris: Champion, 1978), p. 248, line 21ff.: "*Or puez tu bien dire que tu es mesaventureuz, quant tu a achever ceste haute aventure n'as esté ou cil troi pseudome ont esté . . .*"
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 265, line 17.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 266, line 18.
- 38 See Louis-Fernand Flûtre, "Études sur *Le Roman de Perceforest*," *Romania*, 70 (1948/49), 474–522; 71 (1950), 374–92 and 482–508; 74 (1953), 44–102; for the comment, see 70 (1948/49), 474.
- 39 *Le Roman de Perceforest*, in the collection of the Textes littéraires français, 12 vols. (Paris/Geneva: Droz, 1979–2012): *Première Partie*, ed. Jane H. M. Taylor, 1979; *Première Partie*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 2 vols., 2007; *Deuxième Partie*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 2 vols., 1999 and 2001; *Troisième Partie*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 3 vols., 1988, 1991, 1993; *Quatrième Partie*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 2 vols., 1987; *Cinquième Partie*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 2 vols., 2012.
- 40 Jeanne Lods, *Le Roman de Perceforest: origines, composition, caractères, valeur et influence*, Société de publications romanes et françaises, 32 (Geneva: Droz; Lille: Giard, 1951), p. 58.
- 41 *Perceforest, Quatrième Partie*, ed. Roussineau, vol. 1, p. 473, line 29: "*pour le Dieu Souverain servir selon la loy de adont.*"
- 42 Roussineau, *ibid.*, "Introduction," p. lxxxvii. With regard to the theological problem of this pre-Christian religion, cf. Jane H. M. Taylor, "Reason and

Faith in the *Roman de Perceforest*,” in *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead*, ed. W. Rothwell et al. (Manchester University Press; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1980), pp. 304–22.

43 *Perceforest, Quatrième Partie*, ed. Roussineau, vol. 1, p. 400, line 625.

44 *Ibid.*, “Introduction,” p. lxxx: “le pivot central du roman.”

45 *Ibid.*, “Introduction,” p. lxxxiii.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, p. 186, line 295.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 400, line 628ff. and line 634.

49 *Ibid.*, “Introduction,” p. lxxxii.

50 *Ibid.*, line 621.

51 It was Jeanne Lods who first drew attention to this text, the discontinuous parts of which are printed as a coherent tale at the end of her book, *Le Roman de Perceforest*, pp. 283–95. As for the philosophical and historical dimensions of the tale, see Friedrich Wolfzettel, “La Belle Endormie: Le conte merveilleux populaire mis au service des idéologies courtoises,” in Friedrich Wolfzettel, *Le Conte en palimpseste: Studien zur Funktion von Märchen und Mythos im französischen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005), pp. 114–35.

CHAPTER 7 THE PROSE *BRUT*, HARDYNG’S CHRONICLE, AND THE ALLITERATIVE *MORTE* *ARTHURE*: THE END OF THE STORY

- 1 *Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition*, ed. Mary Hamel (New York: Garland, 1984). Citations of the *Morte Arthure* will be to this edition (with modifications in spacing); line numbers will appear within parentheses in the text. For earlier editions, see Hamel’s bibliography, p. 399. The work has been translated several times into modern English, most recently by Simon Armitage, “*The Death of King Arthur*”: *A New Verse Translation* (New York: Norton, 2012).
- 2 See Larry D. Benson, “The Date of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” in *Medieval Studies in Honor of Lillian Herlands Hornstein*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., and Robert K. Raymo (New York: New York University Press, 1976), pp. 20–29. On the provenance, see *Morte*, ed. Hamel, pp. 72–75.
- 3 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 3rd edn., rev. P. J. C. Field, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 186–247.
- 4 William Matthews, *The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative “Morte Arthure”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960). An issue of *Arthuri-ana* (20.2 [2010]) includes a collection of essays on the Alliterative *Morte*, and there is also an earlier collection, *The Alliterative “Morte Arthure”: A Reassessment of the Poem*, ed. Karl Heinz Göller (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981).
- 5 *Morte*, ed. Hamel, p. 3. The MS is Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91.
- 6 See Hamel’s stemma for the Thornton MS, pp. 5–14. The Scottish chronicler Andrew of Wyntoun mentions a poet Huchoun of the Auld Ryall, who wrote

- the “Gestis Historiall” of Arthure, of which he gives a 102-line synopsis (*The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, vol. iv, Scottish Text Society 54 [Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1906], lines 4279–381). Scholars once assumed that the “Gestis” was the Alliterative *Morte* and therefore attributed a Scottish origin to it. See my discussion of Andrew in *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*, vol. viii of *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, gen. eds. J. Burke Severs, Albert E. Hartung, and Peter G. Beidler, 11 vols. (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967–2005), p. 2688, and discussions of Huchoun by Helaine Newstead in *Manual*, vol. 1, pp. 44–46, and Laurence Muir in *Manual*, vol. 11 (1970), pp. 390–91, 542–43. Also see my “The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Scottish Arthurian Tradition,” in *Chivalry, Knighthood and War in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. J. Ridyard, *Sewanee Mediaeval Studies*, 9 (1999), pp. 151–63.
- 7 Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 11, 31.
 - 8 The number varies depending on what one classifies as a Prose *Brut*. In the case of the Anglo-Norman *Brut*, fifty-one to fifty-five manuscripts survive. In the case of the English Prose *Brut*, I list 172 manuscripts in *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*, pp. 2818–21; Lister Matheson lists 181 in *The Prose “Brut”: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), pp. xxiii–xxxi. Matheson classifies several chronicles as “peculiar versions” of the Prose *Brut* that are, for the most part, textually unrelated to the others, except that they used the English Prose *Brut* as a source. I classified these as separate chronicles. In view of clarifications since the publication of my list in 1989 (including the discoveries of other manuscripts of the English Prose *Brut*), by my count the number of surviving manuscripts is 176; by Matheson’s, 183.
 - 9 For modern editions, see *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose “Brut” Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006); *The Brut or the Chronicles of England*, ed. Friedrich W. D. Brie, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, 131, 136 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906, 1908). Citations of the Prose *Brut* (by volume and page numbers) refer to the Brie edition.
 - 10 So far the first version, found in London, British Library MS Lansdowne 204, has not been published in its entirety. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford published excerpts in 1912, and Christine Harker, Richard Moll, and Sarah Peverley edited parts of it in their PhD dissertations. Sarah Peverley and James Simpson are editing the entire chronicle for the TEAMS series published by the Medieval Institute at Kalamazoo. See Kingsford, “The First Version of Hardyng’s *Chronicle*,” *English Historical Review*, 27 (1912), 462–82, 740–53; Harker, “John Hardyng’s *Arthur*: A Critical Edition,” University of California, Riverside (1996); Moll, “Appendix B: John Hardyng’s *Chronicle* [the Arthurian section],” in “Fact and Fictions: Chronicle, Romance and Arthurian Narrative in England, 1300–1470,” University of Toronto (1999), pp. 334–80; Peverley,

- “John Hardyng’s *Chronicle*: A Study of the Two Versions and a Critical Edition of Both for the Period 1327–1464,” University of Hull (2004).
- 11 See A. S. G. Edwards, “The Manuscripts and Texts of the Second Version of John Hardyng’s *Chronicle*,” in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), pp. 75–84. The second version was printed twice by Richard Grafton in 1543 and was edited as *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. Henry Ellis (London, 1812); citations of page numbers (in parentheses) in the chronicle refer to this edition. Sarah Peverley is preparing a new edition of the second version for Boydell & Brewer.
 - 12 Rosalind Field, “Romance as History, History as Romance,” in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 163–73; D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 55–92.
 - 13 See Robert W. Hanning, “Arthurian Evangelists: The Language of Truth in Thirteenth-Century French Prose Romances,” *Philological Quarterly*, 64 (1985), 347–65. The Vulgate *Estoire del Saint Graal*, which tells of Joseph of Arimathea’s bringing the Grail to Britain, and the Vulgate *Merlin*, which draws upon material that originated in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, would be good examples of this; compare [Chapter 6](#) of this volume.
 - 14 For the Arthurian story in French chronicles, see Robert Huntington Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles* (1906), 2nd edn., ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966), pp. 209–33 (chronicles written in French) and p. 238 (one in Latin). Fletcher, however, includes works like the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* and Thomas Gray’s *Scalacronica*, both written in England, and Flemish chronicles of Jean des Preis (Jean d’Outremeuse) and Jehan de Waurin.
 - 15 Boccaccio, “De Arturo Britonum Rege,” in *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Vittorio Zaccaria, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, gen. ed. Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), vol. ix, pp. 726–27; translation in Boccaccio, *The Fates of Illustrious Men*, trans. Lewis Brewer Hall (New York: Ungar, 1965), p. 214.
 - 16 Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 206.
 - 17 See Lesley Johnson, “Robert Mannyng’s History of Arthurian Literature,” in *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor*, ed. Ian Wood and G. A. Loud (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), pp. 129–47, and Ad Putter, “Finding Time for Romance: Medieval Arthurian Literary History,” *Medium Ævum*, 63 (1994), 1–16.
 - 18 Felicity Riddy, “Reading for England: Arthurian Literature and National Consciousness,” *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, 43 (1991), 314–32.
 - 19 The prophecy to Cadwallader does not appear in the English Prose *Brut* manuscripts derived directly from the Anglo-Norman version. However, over half of the surviving English Prose *Brut* manuscripts have an interpolation that

- Matheson refers to as “the intrusive Cadwallader episode” (Matheson, *Prose Brut*, pp. 57–61).
- 20 Tamar Drukker, “King, Crusader, Knight: The Composite Arthur of the Middle English Prose *Brut*,” *Arthurian Literature*, 20 (2003), 172.
 - 21 For a discussion of the significance of this episode, see my “Mordred’s Sons,” in *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, ed. Karen Cherewatuk and K. S. Whetter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 33–49.
 - 22 See Lazamon, *Brut*, ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, 2 vols., Early English Text Society O. S. 250, 277 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963, 1978), vol. II, p. 750, line 14297 (Caligula MS).
 - 23 On Hardyng’s probable age at death, see Peverley, “John Hardyng’s *Chronicle*,” p. 43; on the chronicle as propaganda, see Edwards, “Manuscripts.”
 - 24 See the chronicles in my *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*.
 - 25 For a discussion of these, see Alain Renoir and C. David Benson, “John Lydgate,” in *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, vol. VI, pp. 1864–65. A supplement to this is Linne R. Mooney, “Lydgate’s ‘Kings of England’ and Another Verse Chronicle of the Kings,” *Viator*, 20 (1989), 255–89, which questions Renoir’s attribution of one version to Lydgate.
 - 26 Aylett Sammes wrote: “his Authority may be supposed to be as bad as his Verses”; *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata* (London, 1676), p. 212; cited by Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 157.
 - 27 See my “Glastonbury,” in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. Siân Echard (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 113–16, 120 [108–31].
 - 28 See Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, 4 vols., Early English Text Society, E. S. 121, 122, 123, 124 (1924–27), vol. III, pp. 898–913. Lydgate began writing *Fall of Princes* in 1431 and probably finished it in 1438 or 1439 (*Fall*, ed. Bergen, vol. I, pp. ix–x), before the completion of Hardyng’s first version in 1457. John Withrington finds it “not implausible” that Hardyng was indebted to Lydgate for his story of Arthur; see “The Arthurian Epitaph in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*,” *Arthurian Literature*, 7 (1987), 131, n. 82. Later, when Hardyng tells of the loss of Britain to the Saxons, he describes Fortune as a punishing agent and cites “Bochas” as a source (Hardyng, *Chronicle*, pp. 181–82). “Bochas” usually referred not to Boccaccio’s *De Casibus* but to Lydgate’s adaptation of it, *Fall of Princes* (Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 195).
 - 29 Sarah Peverley, “Dynasty and Division: The Depiction of King and Kingdom in John Hardyng’s *Chronicle*,” *The Medieval Chronicle*, 3 (2004), 149–70, esp. 156–58, 163.
 - 30 Patterson, *Negotiating*, p. 198.
 - 31 See, for example, Matthews, *Tragedy*, pp. 184–92; George R. Keiser, “Edward III and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” *Speculum*, 48 (1973), 37–51; Patricia DeMarco, “An Arthur for the Ricardian Age: Crown, Nobility, and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 464–93.
 - 32 Patterson, *Negotiating*, p. 212.

- 33 See George B. Parks, "King Arthur and the Roads to Rome," *JEGP*, 45 (1946), 164–70; Benson, "Date," 24–28; *Morte*, ed. Hamel, p. 62.
- 34 See DeMarco, "Ricardian Age," 476–93; Patterson, *Negotiating*, pp. 217–29; *Morte Arthure*, ed. John Finlayson, York Medieval Texts (1967; rpt. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 15–20.
- 35 Larry D. Benson, "The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Medieval Tragedy," *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, 11 (1966), 75–87; Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 98; Cooper, *English Romance*, p. 497, n. 59.
- 36 See Matthews, *Tragedy*, esp. pp. 178–92; P. J. C. Field, "Malory's Mordred and the *Morte Arthure*," in P. J. C. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), pp. 100–1; *Morte*, ed. Finlayson, pp. 15–20; John Finlayson, "The Concept of the Hero in 'Morte Arthure,'" in *Chaucer und seine Zeit*, ed. Arno Esch (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968), pp. 249–74; Michael Twomey, "Heroic Kingship and Unjust War in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," in *Kings and Kingship*, ed. Joel Rosenthal, Acta 11 (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1984), pp. 133–51.
- 37 For the sources, see *Morte*, ed. Hamel, pp. 34–53.
- 38 "*La Mort le Roi Artu*": *roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean Frappier, 3rd edn. (Geneva: Droz, 1964), pp. 225–29, 247; *The Death of King Arthur*, trans. James Cable (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 204–7, 222.
- 39 *Morte*, ed. Hamel, p. 384, n. to line 3986.
- 40 Guenevere had recently given birth to one of them (3576) and is later presented as caring for them (3907–10).
- 41 The drowning of the children could have been suggested by Arthur's attempt in the Post-Vulgate *Merlin* to kill Mordred by killing the children born in the kingdom at the time of Mordred's birth; however, after Arthur is warned in a dream not to do this and instead to put the children in an unmanned boat, they all survive. Arthur's actions are worse in Malory's account since there he deliberately attempts to drown all of the children in order to kill Mordred. See the discussion of Malory's unusual portrait of Arthur at this point in P. J. C. Field, "Malory's Mordred," pp. 98–102. Arthur's actions in Malory's version could have been suggested by Arthur's order to have Mordred's children killed in the Alliterative *Morte*.
- 42 Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 13.
- 43 [Henry de] Bracton, *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. George E. Woodbine, trans. Samuel E. Thorne, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), vol. 11, pp. 335, 299, 324, 353, 424.
- 44 Historically, three of the children and grandchildren imprisoned with Hugolino were young men; the only boy was fifteen. Dante (followed by Chaucer) made them all children. See Dorothy L. Sayers's note in her translation of *The Divine Comedy: 1: Hell* (1949; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 283. In England perhaps the best-known story of the killing of children is that of the princes in the Tower; few have defended the murderer, whether it was Richard III or Henry VII.

- 45 Frappier, *Étude sur La Mort le Roi Artu*, 3rd edn. (Geneva: Droz, 1972), pp. 249–52.
- 46 Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 171, 231.
- 47 On the problematic version in the *Roman du Graal*, see *The Post-Vulgate, Part I: The Merlin Continuation*, trans. Martha Asher, in *Lancelot–Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, gen. ed. Norris J. Lacy, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993–96), vol. IV, p. 169, n. 3.
- 48 For a fuller discussion of Mordred's sons in medieval literature, see my "Mordred's Sons," cited in n. 21 above.
- 49 See Peter Korrel, *An Arthurian Triangle: A Study of the Origin, Development, and Characterization of Arthur, Guinevere, and Modred* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp. 215, 220.
- 50 *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *destine*, definition 1.
- 51 Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 53.

CHAPTER 8 ARTHUR IN TRANSITION: MALORY'S MORTE DARTHUR

- 1 Terence McCarthy, "Old Worlds, New Worlds: King Arthur in England," in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's "Morte Darthur"*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., and Jessica G. Brogdon, *Arthurian Studies*, 42 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 5–23.
- 2 See Helen Cooper, "Opening Up the Malory Manuscript," in *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of "Le Morte Darthur"*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler, Robert L. Kindrick, and Michael N. Salda, *Arthurian Studies*, 47 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 255–84; P. J. C. Field, "Malory's Own Marginalia," *Medium Ævum*, 70 (2001), 226–39; and James Wade, "Malory's Marginalia Reconsidered," *Arthuriana*, 21 (2011), 70–86.
- 3 For a full discussion, see the essays in *The Malory Debate*.
- 4 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 3rd edn., rev. P. J. C. Field, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1990), vol. I, p. cxliii.
- 5 See Raluca L. Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's "Morte Darthur"*, *Arthurian Studies*, 55 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), and Karen Cherewatuk, "Sir Thomas Malory's 'Grete Booke,'" in *Social and Literary Contexts*, pp. 42–67.
- 6 McCarthy, "Old Worlds," p. 5.
- 7 On some structural aspects of the *Amadis* in the context of late chivalric romance, see Chapter 11 of this volume.
- 8 On Malory's life, see P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, *Arthurian Studies*, 29 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), and for a comparison of that with other gentry of the region, Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

- 9 In referring to passages in the *Works* (cited above in note 4) I use Caxton's book and chapter numbers, regularly included in editions of Malory at large.
- 10 On the complex politics of the period, see Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
- 11 Megan Leitch, "Speaking (of) Treason: Malory's *Morte Darthur*," *Arthurian Literature*, 27 (2010), 103–34.
- 12 Christopher Cannon, "Malory's Crime: Chivalric Identity and the Evil Will," in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. David Aers (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 159–83.
- 13 For the political background, see Elizabeth T. Pochoda, *Arthurian Propaganda: "Le Morte Darthur" as an Historical Ideal of Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971).
- 14 See further Helen Cooper, "Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-killing in the Prose Romances," in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 141–62.
- 15 For a conspectus of these, see Ralph Norris, *Malory's Library: The Sources of the "Morte Darthur"*, *Arthurian Studies*, 71 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008).

CHAPTER 9 THE *CHANSON DE GESTE* AS A CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

- 1 I use the term (*works*) as Paul Zumthor uses the term *œuvres* in his *Introduction à la poésie orale* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 81.
- 2 Cf., for example, *Ami et Amile: chanson de geste*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski (Paris: Champion, 1969), lines 1–3. See on this point Jean Frappier, "Réflexions sur les rapports des chansons de geste et de l'histoire," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 73 (1957), 2–7 [1–19].
- 3 See especially [Chapters 5 and 6](#).
- 4 See Georges Duby, *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols. (1973; rpt. Paris: Flammarion, 1988), notably vol. 1, *La société chevaleresque*, pp. 143–80 ("Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XIe et XIIe siècles" and "Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France aux XIe et XIIe siècles").
- 5 Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1980), pp. 34–35.
- 6 A similar hypothesis is developed by R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), notably pp. 92–108, but from a different perspective and with differing interpretations; the concept of "feudal mutation," which underpins these analyses (see pp. 66–67) but is no longer universally accepted by historians, should be treated with particular caution.
- 7 *Garin le Loherenc*, ed. Anne Iker-Gittleman, 3 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1996–97), lines 558–64.
- 8 I have proposed calling this the *mode légendaire*: "Mémoire et légende: deux modes de la narration en ancien français," in *Plaist vos oïr bone cançon vallant?*

- Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à François Suard*, coordinated by Dominique Boutet, Marie-Madeleine Castellani, Françoise Ferrand, and Aimé Petit, 2 vols. (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3, [1999]), vol. II, pp. 569–78.
- 9 Various traditions tell of pilgrimage to the black cross of the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Soissons, founded in the seventh century by Saint Drosin or Drausin, and the boon of invincibility that it conferred on knights departing for the Crusades.
 - 10 *Hervis de Mes: chanson de geste anonyme (début du XIII^e siècle)*, ed. Jean-Charles Herbin (Geneva: Droz, 1992), appendix xxiv, pp. 471–520.
 - 11 In referring to “time-space” I have adapted the concept of “chronotope,” discussed in Mikhail Bakhtine, *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, trans. Daria Olivier (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), “Formes du temps et du chronotope dans le roman,” pp. 239–60; for the citations, see “Récit épique et roman (Méthodologie de l'analyse du roman),” pp. 449 and 452.
 - 12 This corresponds to another rupture, noted by Guenée, *Histoire*, pp. 81 and 320: the partition of Verdun as the start of a new historical period, that of “modern” France.
 - 13 *Gormont et Isembart: fragment de chanson de geste du XII^e siècle*, ed. Alphonse Bayot, 3rd edn. (Paris: Champion, 1931).
 - 14 *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. and trans. Sarah Kay (Oxford University Press, 1992).
 - 15 This is also the case in *Aymeri de Narbonne*, ed. Hélène Gallé (Paris: Champion, 2007), redaction B1, lines 4557–61; redaction R, lines 4668–72.
 - 16 Jean-Pierre Martin, “L'imaginaire de la temporalité dans *Raoul de Cambrai*,” in “*Raoul de Cambrai*” entre l'épique et le romanesque, ed. Dominique Boutet, *Littérales*, 25 (Nanterre: Centre des Sciences de la Littérature, Université Paris X-Nanterre, 2000), p. 27 [25–44].
 - 17 Here I take up and supplement some of the ideas developed in my article “Sur les structures temporelles de la narration dans l'épopée médiévale française,” in *Épopées d'Afrique de l'Ouest, épopées médiévales d'Europe*, coordinated by Lilyan Kesteloot, François Suard, and Dominique Boutet, *Littérales*, 29 (Nanterre: Centre des Sciences de la Littérature, Université Paris X-Nanterre, 2002), pp. 55–71.
 - 18 *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. and trans. Jean Dufournet (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1993).
 - 19 Léon Gautier, *Les Épopées françaises: étude sur les origines et l'histoire de la littérature nationale*, 2nd edn., 4 vols. (Paris: Société générale de librairie catholique, 1878–92), vol. I, p. 91.
 - 20 *Girart de Vienne*, ed. Wolfgang van Emden (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1977), p. xxiii.
 - 21 *La Chanson de Floovant: étude critique et édition*, ed. F. H. Bateson (Loughborough: Echo, 1938).
 - 22 Guillaume deposits it together with his other arms in Aniane, according to *Le Moniage Guillaume*, ed. Nelly Andrieux-Reix (Paris: Champion, 2003), lines 116–25 and 196–201.

- 23 On approaches to antiquity in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France, see [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) of this volume.
- 24 On this question, see my articles “Les références au mythe troyen dans les chansons de geste à sujet carolingien,” *Bien dire et bien apprendre*, 10 (1992), 101–17, and “Les Sarrasins, l’idolâtrie et l’imaginaire de l’Antiquité dans les chansons de geste,” in *Littérature et religion au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, ed. Jean-Claude Vallecalle (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1997), pp. 27–46.
- 25 *Girart de Vienne*, ed. van Emden, lines 4947–72.
- 26 *Guibert d’Andrenas: chanson de geste*, ed. J. Melander (Paris: Champion, 1922), lines 2454–61.
- 27 *Hugues Capet: chanson de geste du XIVe siècle*, ed. Noëlle Laborderie (Paris: Champion, 1997), lines 5513–6187.
- 28 Emmanuelle Poulain-Gautret, *La tradition littéraire d’Ogier le Danois après le XIIIe siècle: permanence et renouvellement du genre épique médiéval* (Paris: Champion, 2005), pp. 360–64.
- 29 The *Enfances Renier*, at the end of the thirteenth century, makes use of another opening in its endeavor to establish a genealogical link between the world of the Carolingian epic and that of the Crusader *chansons*.
- 30 See, for example, François Suard, “Le romanesque dans *Raoul de Cambrai*,” in *Raoul de Cambrai entre l’épique et le romanesque*, ed. Boutet, pp. 45–63.
- 31 The dissonance between ordinary times and the period in which the heroes live is a well-known motif in popular tradition: see Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Les Tribulations du roi Herla,” in *Formes médiévales du conte merveilleux*, ed. Jacques Berlioz, Claude Brémond, and Catherine Velay-Vallantin (Paris: Stock, 1989), pp. 157–64.
- 32 See Bakhtine, *Esthétique*, pp. 239–60. A particularly emblematic example of this affinity is *Jourdain de Blaye*, which was strongly influenced by *Apollonius de Tyr*; see *Jourdain de Blaye* = *Jourdains de Blavies: chanson de geste*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski, rev. edn. (Paris: Champion, 1991), pp. xvii–xxii.
- 33 The heroes do not only engender their own fathers, as R. Howard Bloch has written (*Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 95), drawing somewhat on the formulation used by Jean Frappier; they also have children who can in turn become heroes of the *chansons de geste*, like Maillefer, Girbert de Metz, Gui de Nanteuil, or Jourdain de Blaye.
- 34 See especially the comments on the *Mort Artu* in [Chapter 4](#). This is not to say that love has no dynastic or social dimension in Arthurian (and non-Arthurian) romance at large. See, for example (in this volume), the discussions of the French-language romance of *Fergus* ([Chapter 4](#)), the German romance of *Parzival* ([Chapter 5](#)), and the early modern Italian *romanzi* of Orlando by Boiardo and Ariosto ([Chapter 10](#)).
- 35 See Jean-Pierre Martin, “*Beuve de Hantone* entre roman et chanson de geste,” in *Le romanesque dans l’épique*, ed. Dominique Boutet, Littérales, 31 (Nanterre: Centre des Sciences de la Littérature, Université Paris X-Nanterre, 2003), pp. 97–112, and Jean-Pierre Martin, “*Orson de Beauvais*” et l’écriture épique à la fin du XIIe siècle: traditions et innovations (Paris: Champion, 2005), pp. 38–42.

- 36 Frappier, “Réflexions,” 12, underlines “the tendency to transform history into myth.”
- 37 Guenée, *Histoire*, pp. 78–82; Duby, *Hommes*, vol. 1, p. 160.
- 38 Guenée, *Histoire*, p. 221; Duby, “Les ‘jeunes’ dans la société aristocratique dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XIIe siècle,” in *Hommes*, vol. 1, p. 140 [129–42].
- 39 Compare the comment of Mary Carruthers, *Le livre de la mémoire: une étude de la mémoire dans la culture médiévale*, trans. Diane Meur (Paris: Macula, 2002), p. 282, on the mediation of the past for the present and the future. The propinquity shared by historiographic quest and epic composition may perhaps explain the rarity of Provençal *chansons de geste*; see Guenée, *Histoire*, pp. 310–12, where he notes the scant interest in history in southern France at that time.
- 40 On *relic* versus *remnant* see my “Quelques observations sur l’expression du passé dans la chanson de geste,” in *Histoire et littérature au Moyen Age*, ed. Danielle Buschinger (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991), pp. 284–85 and 288 [279–90].
- 41 Henri Bresc, “Le temps des géants,” in *Temps, mémoire, tradition au Moyen-Age: actes du XIIIe Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public, Aix-en-Provence, 4–5 juin 1982* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, and Marseille: distribution J. Laffitte, 1983), p. 247 [243–66].
- 42 “Gerbert de Mez”: *chanson de geste du XIIe siècle*, ed. Pauline Taylor (Namur: Secrétariat des publications, Faculté Universitaires; Louvain: Nauwelaerts; Lille: Giard, 1952), lines 2791–92. On this subject see my article “Les Sarrasins,” pp. 40–42.
- 43 Bresc, “Le temps des géants,” p. 251.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- 45 See my article “Les Sarrasins,” pp. 27–37 and 43–44.
- 46 *Les Rédactions en vers du Couronnement de Louis*, ed. Yvan G. Lepage (Geneva: Droz, 1978). The quotations are taken from the *AB* version.
- 47 *Chanson de Roland*, ed. Dufournet, lines 2615–16.
- 48 *Les Narbonnais: chanson de geste*, ed. Herman Suchier, 2 vols., Société des anciens textes français (Paris: Didot, 1898).
- 49 *La Chanson de Guillaume*, ed. and trans. F. Suard (Paris: Bordas, 1991), lines 1262–70.
- 50 *Chanson de Roland*, ed. Dufournet, lines 193–213.
- 51 See Jean-Pierre Martin and Marielle Lignereux, *La Chanson de Roland* (Neuilly: Atlande, 2003), p. 80. The argument in this paragraph summarizes the conclusions of my article “Remarques sur les récits rétrospectifs et les genres narratifs de la *Chanson de Roland* au *Tristan* en prose,” in *Et c’est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: Hommage à Jean Dufournet: Littérature, histoire et langue du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1993), vol. 11, pp. 911–23.
- 52 Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. Mario Roques (1952; rpt. Paris: Champion, 1978), lines 5998 ff.
- 53 *Eneas: roman du XIIe siècle*, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, 2 vols. (1925–29; rpt. Paris: Champion, 1983–85), lines 99–182 and 4353–78.
- 54 At times the different ways in which genres and subgenres conceive the historical process at large are suggested by the different ways in which they

- frame their own acts of retrospection. Other essays in this study explore some of those diverse forms of retrospection. See, for example, [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) on the evocation of the past in medieval romances of antiquity, and [Chapters 11](#), [14](#), and [15](#) on the oscillation of time frames in early modern narratives.
- 55 Guenée, *Histoire*, pp. 82–84.
 - 56 That is, when it adopts a narrative form: Guenée, *Histoire*, p. 205; this does not preclude an intense preoccupation, in medieval historical thought, with the matter of dates: *ibid.*, p. 147.
 - 57 Martin, “Quelques observations,” pp. 280–83.
 - 58 See, for example, the Franco-Italian *Karleto: La “Geste Francor” di Venezia*, ed. Aldo Rosellini (Brescia: La Scuola, 1986), line 7274.
 - 59 *La traduction du Pseudo-Turpin du manuscrit Vatican Regina 624*, ed. Claude Buridant (Geneva: Droz, 1976), p. 100. On the clerical spirit of the *Pseudo-Turpin*, see Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *La “Chanson de Roland” et la tradition épique des Francs*, 2nd rev. edn. (with the assistance of René Louis), trans. Irénée-Marcel Cluzel (Paris: Picard, 1960), pp. 341–42.
 - 60 Jean-Pierre Martin, “Quand la chronique latine démarque la chanson de geste: la *Chronique de Waulsort et Raoul de Cambrai*,” in *Le Nord de la France entre épopée et chronique*, ed. Emmanuelle Poulain-Gautret et al. (Arras: Artois Presses Université, 2005), pp. 57–66.
 - 61 Frappier, “Réflexions,” 13–15.
 - 62 “*Ansejs de Gascogne et la Flandre*,” in *Picard d’hier et d’aujourd’hui*, texts compiled by Jacques Landrecies and Aimé Petit, *Bien dire et bien apprendre*, 21 (2003), 207–28, and “L’Histoire otage des chansons de geste ou l’inverse? Le cas d’*Ansejs de Gascogne* et de la *Vengeance Fromondin*,” in *Le Nord de la France*, pp. 244–45 [239–65].
 - 63 Carruthers, *Le livre de la mémoire*, p. 283.
 - 64 Dominique Boutet, *Charlemagne et Arthur ou le roi imaginaire* (Paris: Champion, 1992).
 - 65 Compare the discussion of French Grail romance in [Chapter 6](#).
 - 66 Mircea Eliade, *Traité d’histoire des religions*, rev. edn. (Paris: Payot, 1964), p. 360.
 - 67 In his introduction to *Roland furieux*, trans. Nino Frank (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1982), Italo Calvino stresses the intermingling of Breton romance and Carolingian *epos* – a rich composite from which would develop *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando Furioso*. On that composite, compare the following chapter in this volume.

CHAPTER 10 RUGGIERO’S STORY: THE MAKING OF A DYNASTIC HERO

- 1 See Elio Monducci and Gino Badini, with Giuseppe Trenti, *Matteo Maria Boiardo: La vita nei documenti del suo tempo* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1997), p. 39 (entry 71).
- 2 See *Die Borsias des Tito Strozzi: Ein lateinisches Epos der Renaissance*, ed. Walther Ludwig (Munich: Fink, 1977); citations of the poem refer to this edition.

- 3 For the *Carmina de laudibus Estensium* and a profile of Boiardo as panegyrist to the Este family, see Giovanni Ponte, “Imitazione e originalità nei ‘Carmina’ e nei ‘Pastoralia’ del Boiardo,” in *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 65 (1961), 83–96; Riccardo Brusca, “Matteo Maria Boiardo,” in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Enrico Malato, vol. 111, *Il Quattrocento* (Rome: Salerno, 1996), pp. 647–52 [635–708]; Stefano Carrai, “Boiardo dai ‘Pastoralia’ alle ‘Pastorali,’” in Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Pastorali*, ed. Stefano Carrai and Marina Riccucci ([Milan]: Fondazione Pietro Bembo, and Parma: Ugo Guanda, 2005), pp. ix–xxv.
- 4 Ludwig, *Borsias*, pp. 57–58, explains this narrative *défaillance* of Tito’s poem as an inevitable result of the contrast between “epic” and “panegyric.” Tito, he argues, intended to build a Virgilian epos, but this narrative intention was finally defeated by Tito’s more natural inclination towards a Claudianesque *laudatio* of his lords.
- 5 The manuscript, entitled *Origo Estensium principum*, is in the Biblioteca Estense of Ferrara (Estensis Latinus 679); on the text and its story, see Ludwig’s introduction in *Borsias*, especially pp. 50–51 and 70–71.
- 6 For the editions and the bibliographical history of Boiardo’s poem, see the classic work of Neil Harris, *Bibliografia dell’“Orlando innamorato,”* 2 vols. (Modena: Panini, 1988–91).
- 7 See, for example, the introduction of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti to Matteo Maria Boiardo, *L’innamoramento di Orlando*, ed. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti and Cristina Montagnani, 2 vols. (Milan: Ricciardi, 1999), hereafter cited as *L’innamoramento*, vol. 1, p. xv, arguing that the legend of Ruggiero must have existed before the works of both Tito and Boiardo, and that in any case Tito never displayed elsewhere an interest in chivalric literature and would not be a suitable candidate for the invention of the legend. For the same reason, I would not shy away from proposing a direct influence of the younger Boiardo on his older, but less experienced (in chivalric matters) uncle; see my discussion below.
- 8 In any event, the character of Ruggiero, strictly speaking, is not unknown: his story has connections with the Carolingian saga of the *Reali di Francia* (*The Royal House of France*) and particularly with the Italian narrative tradition of *Aspromonte*, where there is a hero named Ruggiero, the son of Riccieri and Galaciella. What is new, in Boiardo’s as well as in Tito Strozzi’s poem, is the connection between the stories and characters of *Aspromonte* and the dynastic legend of the Este family.
- 9 See, for example, the introduction (cited above) of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti in *L’innamoramento*; her essay “Il mondo cavalleresco e la corte estense,” in the collection *I libri di “Orlando innamorato”* (Modena: Panini, 1987), pp. 13–33, especially the section entitled “La genealogia estense tra leggenda e storia,” pp. 30–32; and Marco Dorigatti, “Rugiero and the Dynastic Theme from Boiardo to Ariosto,” in *Italy in Crisis: 1494*, ed. Jane Everson and Diego Zancani (Oxford: Legenda–European Humanities Research Centre, 2000), pp. 92–128.
- 10 See Tissoni Benvenuti’s introduction to *L’innamoramento*, vol. 1, pp. xv–xvi, and her “La genealogia estense,” p. 31.

- 11 See the footnotes to the account of Ruggiero's genealogy (*Orlando Innamorato*, III.v.18–37) in the edition of Boiardo's poem by Riccardo Bruscasti: *Orlando innamorato*, 2 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), and in *L'innamoramento*. The survival of Astyanax was not a totally original invention of Boiardo: see Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* ix.264. Further, in many French genealogies the ancestor of the French kings, Francus, was identified with Astyanax himself; see my discussion below.
- 12 "Muse . . . guide my tongue, and sing to me the ancestry of the kings of France, those who descended from Francion, Hector's son, of Trojan blood." A careful review of the popularity of Trojan ancestry (together with an exhaustive scrutiny of the related bibliography) appears in Elena Fini, "Il mito delle origini: narrazioni genealogiche e legittimazione del potere nelle dinastie rinascimentali," PhD thesis, Istituto di Studi Umanistici, University of Florence (2006), pp. 13–19 and passim; Fini cites the passage from Ronsard on p. 13.
- 13 See Roberto Bizzocchi, *Genealogie incredibili: Scritti di storia nell'Europa moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).
- 14 See the detailed discussion of Bizzocchi, *Genealogie incredibili*, pp. 216–20.
- 15 See her commentary to III.v.16 in *L'innamoramento*.
- 16 This concept is central to Foucault's oeuvre; see, for example, Michel Foucault, *La volontà di sapere* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1976).
- 17 See, for example, the studies of Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975); Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977); and Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments, 1485–1625* (Uppsala: [Uppsala University], 1999).
- 18 An excellent account of this genealogical strategy is in Fini, "Il mito delle origini"; see especially chapter 3, "Regalità inglese."
- 19 This passage (near the end of the play) is cited in Yates, *Astraea*, p. 62, and in Fini, "Il mito delle origini," p. 226; see also Evangelia H. Waller, "A Possible Interpretation of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*," in *The Journal of English and German Philology*, 24 (1925), 219–45.
- 20 English quotations come from Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato*, trans. Charles Stanley Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- 21 The centrality of this love ideology in Boiardo's poem has been broadly discussed and illustrated, with special emphasis on the connection with Boiardo's own love poetry and with the pervasive Platonic bent of contemporary Ferrarese culture; see Domenico de Robertis, "L'esperienza poetica del Quattrocento," in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, vol. III, *Il Quattrocento e l'Ariosto*, ed. Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno (Milan: Garzanti, 1966), pp. 588–610, and Bruscasti, "Matteo Maria Boiardo."
- 22 It has long been noted that Carolingian heroes fall in love in Italian chivalric literature prior to Boiardo's poem, thus creating a sort of "fusion" between the Carolingian and Arthurian cycles – see, for example, Pio Rajna, *Le fonti dell'Orlando furioso* [orig. pub. 1876], 2nd edn. (1900; rpt. [ed. Francesco

- Mazzoni] Florence: Sansoni, 1975), p. 22 and passim – and that the *inamoramento* was already, in Boiardo's time, a stylized genre. But this does not, in my view, diminish the intentional "novelty" of Boiardo's invention, which he presents with a very precise and specific literary and ideological strategy. See the introduction to my edition of the poem; the essay is reprinted (with the title "Primavera arturiana") in my *Studi cavallereschi* (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2003), pp. 3–36.
- 23 See my "Primavera arturiana," especially pp. 16–21.
 - 24 See Bizzocchi, *Genealogie incredibili*, pp. 124ff.; Fini, "Il mito delle origini," especially chapter 4, 4.1 ("Le alternative alla linearità: Discendenza biologica o spirituale").
 - 25 They are aptly signaled by Ludwig in his "Analyse und Kommentar" to *Borsias*.
 - 26 See *Orlando Innamorato*, II.xxx.26–36.
 - 27 See, for example, the discussion near the end of Chapter 13 in this volume on a sixteenth-century sequel to Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.
 - 28 A full account of the continuations of Boiardo's poem, with very useful summaries of their contents, appears in Harris, *Bibliografia*, vol. II, Appendix 3.
 - 29 See the revelations imparted by God to the hermit on the small island where Ruggiero receives his baptism: *Orlando Furioso*, XLI.61–67. These octaves repeat in detail the original narrative plan of Boiardo and almost dictate the potential profile of a continuation of the *Furioso* itself.
 - 30 See, for example, the discussions in Chapters 4–8 of this volume on the conclusions of temporal processes in romances of the "matter of Britain" in medieval France, Germany, and England.
 - 31 Quotations of the original text come from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1992). English translations come from *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (1974; rpt. Oxford University Press, 1983).
 - 32 On this matter see also my essay "Invenzione ricominciamento nel canto I dell' *Orlando furioso*," in *Studi cavallereschi*, pp. 55–73.
 - 33 For the original text, see Torquato Tasso, *Apologia in difesa della Gerusalemme liberata*, in *Scritti sull'Arte poetica*, ed. Ettore Mazzali (1959; rpt. [2 vols.] Turin: Einaudi, 1977), vol. I, p. 75.
 - 34 Significantly, Ruggiero's discarding of the enchanted shield (XXII.92) is very similar to Orlando's discarding of another very special weapon, Cimosco's *arco buso* (iron tube) (IX.91). The two episodes are obviously intended to display a parallel between the two heroes and to promote Ruggiero to the level of Orlando – but not before canto XXII.
 - 35 Compare the discussion in Chapter 14 of this volume on the dynastic discourse of Merlin to Britomart in Book III of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.
 - 36 See "'Ventura' e 'inchiesta' fra Boiardo e Ariosto," in my *Stagioni della civiltà estense* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1983), pp. 87–126.
 - 37 For the original text, see Cosimo I de' Medici, *Lettere*, ed. Giorgio Spini (Florence: Vallecchi, 1940), pp. 88–89. On this letter, see also Robert Bizzocchi, "Tra Ferrara e Firenze: culture genealogico-nobiliari a confronto," in

L'arme e gli amori: Ariosto, Tasso and Guarini in Late Renaissance Florence. Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 27–29, 2001, ed. Massimiliano Rossi and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 3–15.

- 38 On this matter see Fini, “Il mito delle origini,” especially chapter 2.iii (“Le origini di Firenze”).

CHAPTER 11 TEMPORALITY AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN EUROPEAN ROMANCE FROM THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

- 1 Marco Praloran and Nicola Morato, “Nostalgia e fascinazione della letteratura cavalleresca,” in *Il Rinascimento italiano e l'Europa*, vol. 11, *Umanesimo ed educazione*, ed. Gino Belloni and Riccardo Drusi (Treviso: Fondazione Cassamarca, and Costabissara: Angelo Colla, 2007), pp. 487–512.
- 2 Marco Praloran, “*Maraviglioso artificio*”: *tecniche narrative e rappresentative nell'“Orlando Innamorato”* (Lucca: M. Pacini Fazzi, 1990).
- 3 On the presence of the classics in the *Furioso*, see Stephano Jossa, *La fantasia e la memoria: intertestualità ariostesche* (Naples: Liguori, 1996), and Daniel Javitch, “The Poetics of *Variatio* in *Orlando Furioso*,” *Modern Language Quarterly*, 66 (2005), 1–19.
- 4 Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba, “*Tirant lo Blanc*” i altres escrits de *Joanot Martorell*, ed. Martí de Riquer (Barcelona: Ariel, 1979), and Anna Bognolo, “Il ‘Progetto Mambrino’: Per un’ esplorazione delle traduzioni e continuazioni italiane dei *Libros de caballerías*,” *Rivista di Filologia e Letterature Ispaniche*, 6 (2003), 191–202.
- 5 Maxime Chevalier, *L'Arioste en Espagne, 1530–1650: recherches sur l'influence du “Roland furieux”* (Bordeaux: Institut d'études ibériques et ibéro-américaines de l'Université de Bordeaux, 1966).
- 6 See the introduction of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti in Matteo Maria Boiardo, *L'inamoramento di Orlando*, ed. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti and Cristina Montagnani, 2 vols. (Milan: Ricciardi, 1999), vol. 1, pp. xi–xxiii.
- 7 Cesare Segre, *Le strutture e il tempo: [narrazione, poesia, modelli]* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974).
- 8 Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 9 Martín de Riquer, *Tirant lo Blanch, novela de historia y de ficción*, Biblioteca general, 13 (Barcelona: Sirmio, 1992).
- 10 Martín de Riquer and Mario Vargas Llosa, *El combate imaginario: las cartas de batalla de Joanot Martorell* (Barcelona: Barral, 1972).
- 11 Praloran, “*Maraviglioso artificio*.”
- 12 Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik: Studien zur Form der frühen Artus- und Galdichtung*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1970).
- 13 [On the Carolingian era in the *chansons de geste*, see [Chapter 9](#). – ed.]
- 14 Maria Cristina Cabani, “Sul ‘Centiloquio’ di Antonio Pucci,” *Stilistica e metrica italiana*, 6 (2006), 21–81.

- 15 Raffaele Donnarumma, "Boiardo e Pulci: Per una storia dell'Innamorato," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 172 (1995), 161–212, and Marco Praloran, "'Lingua di ferro e voce di bombarda.' La rima nell'Innamoramento de Orlando," in *Il Boiardo e il mondo estense nel Quattrocento: atti del convegno internazionale di studi: Scandiano, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Ferrara, 13–17 settembre 1994*, ed. Giuseppe Anceschi and Tina Matarrese, 2 vols. (Padua: Antenore, 1998), vol. II, pp. 861–907.
- 16 Elspeth Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail: A Study of the Prose "Lancelot"* (Oxford University Press, 1986), and Alexandre Micha, "Notes sur la composition," in Micha, *Essais sur le cycle du Lancelot–Grael* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), pp. 85–127.
- 17 Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*.
- 18 Jean Frappier, "Le cycle de la *Vulgate* (*Lancelot en prose et Lancelot–Grael*)," in *Le roman jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle, Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, vol. IV, t. 1, ed. Jean Frappier and Reinhold R. Grimm (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), pp. 536–89.
- 19 Juan Manuel Cacho Blecua, "El entrelazamiento en el *Amadís* y en las *Sergas de Esplandián*," in *Studia in honorem Prof. Martín de Riquer*, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1986), pp. 235–71; Martín de Riquer, *Estudios sobre el Amadís de Gaula* (Barcelona: Sirmio, 1987); Anna Bognolo, *La finzione rinnovata: Meraviglioso, corte e avventura nel romanzo cavalleresco del primo Cinquecento spagnolo*, Biblioteca di Studi Ispanici, 1 (Pisa: ETS, 1997); and Susana Gil-Albarellos, "*Amadís de Gaula*" y el género caballeresco en España (Valladolid: Secretariado de publicaciones, Universidad de Valladolid, 1999).
- 20 Bognolo, *La finzione rinnovata*.
- 21 Riquer, *Estudios sobre el Amadís de Gaula*, and Bognolo, *La finzione rinnovata*.
- 22 Carlo Dionisotti, "Fortuna e sfortuna del Boiardo nel Cinquecento," in *Il Boiardo e la critica contemporanea: atti del convegno di studi su Matteo Maria Boiardo, Scandiano-Reggio Emilia, 25–27 aprile 1969*, ed. Giuseppe Anceschi (Florence: Olschki, 1970), pp. 221–41; rpt. in Dionisotti, *Boiardo e altri studi avallereschi*, ed. Giuseppe Anceschi and Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti (Novara: Interlinea, 2003), pp. 143–61.
- 23 Riccardo Bruscagli, "'Ventura' e 'inchiesta' fra Boiardo e Ariosto," in *Ludovico Ariosto: lingua, stile e tradizione: atti del Congresso organizzato dai comuni di Reggio Emilia e Ferrara, 12–16 ottobre 1974*, ed. Cesare Segre (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), pp. 107–36, and the introduction to Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato*, ed. Riccardo Bruscagli, 2 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), rpt. with the title "Primavera arturiana" in Bruscagli, *Studi cavallereschi* (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2003), pp. 3–36.
- 24 Daniel Javitch, "*Cantus Interruptus* in the *Orlando Furioso*," *MLN*, 95 (1980), 66–80.
- 25 For an extensive and fully articulated overview, see Alexandre Cioranescu, *L'Arioste en France: des origines à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Éditions des presses modernes, 1939).
- 26 Maria Cristina Cabani, *Fra omaggio e parodia: Petrarca e petrarchismo nel "Furioso"* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1990), and Marco Praloran, "Petrarca in Ariosto:

- il *principium constructionis*,” in *I territori del petrarchismo: frontiere e sconfina-
menti*, ed. Cristina Montagnani (Rome: Bulzoni, 2005), pp. 51–74.
- 27 Praloran, “Petrarca in Ariosto.”
- 28 Marco Praloran, *Tempo e azione nell’“Orlando Furioso”* (Florence: Olschki, 1999).
- 29 Carol J. Chase, “Sur la théorie de l’entrelacement: Ordre et désordre dans le *Lancelot en prose*,” *Modern Philology*, 80 (1983), 227–40; Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).
- 30 On the Italian sixteenth century see the classic works by Klaus W. Hempfer, *Diskrepante Lektüren: die Orlando-Furioso-Rezeption im Cinquecento: historische Rezeptionsforschung als Heuristik der Interpretation* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1987), and Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of “Orlando Furioso”* (Princeton University Press, 1991), as well as the more recent studies by Stefano Jossa, *La fondazione di un genere: il poema eroico tra Ariosto e Tasso* (Rome: Carocci, 2002), and Francesco Sberlati, *Il genere e la disputa: la poetica tra Ariosto e Tasso* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001). On the *Quixote* see David Quint, *Cervantes’s Novel of Modern Times: A New Reading of “Don Quijote”* (Princeton University Press, 2003).
- 31 Praloran, *Tempo e azione*.
- 32 Giuseppe Sangirardi, *Boiardismo ariostesco: presenza e trattamento dell’“Orlando Innamorato” nel “Furioso”* (Lucca: M. Pacini Fazzi, 1993), and Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton University Press, 1979).

CHAPTER 12 THE DISPARAGEMENT OF CHIVALRIC ROMANCE FOR ITS LACK OF HISTORICITY IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN POETICS

- 1 See, for example, the often-quoted passage from the beginning of the *Chanson des Saisnes* of Jean Bodel (active in northern France in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries), which contrasts the *matière de France* in the *chanson de geste*, deemed to be historically true, with the *matière de Bretagne* of romance, described as “*vain et plaisant*.” Compare Petrarch’s famous, later dismissal of “those who fill pages with fantasies: Lancelot, Tristan, and the other errant knights, which the misled vulgar public longs for quite appropriately” [*quei che le carte empion di sogni: / Lancilotto, Tristano e gli altri erranti / ove convien che il vulgo errante agogni*] (*Triumphus Cupidinis* 1.3.79–81). Both passages are cited in the opening chapter of this volume.
- 2 See Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 1961), vol. II, pp. 954–90 and 997–1073. On the debate about epic versus romance see also Daniel Javitch, “Italian Epic Theory,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. III, ed. Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205–15. For the subsequent dispute over the merits of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*, see also Peter M. Brown, “The Historical Significance of the Polemics over Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Studi secenteschi*, 11 (1970), 3–23.

- 3 See Klaus Hempfer, *Diskrepante lecturen: die Orlando-Furioso Rezeption im Cinquecento* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1987), pp. 123–30.
- 4 See Stefano Jossa, “Da Ariosto a Tasso: la verità della storia e le bugie della poesia,” *Studi Rinascimentali*, 2 (2004), 69–82. I am indebted to Jossa’s rapid survey, but we disagree about Tasso’s ongoing commitment to the controlling function of history in epic poetry.
- 5 *L’arte poetica del Sig. Antonio Minturno* (Venice: G. A. Valvassori, 1564), p. 29.
- 6 Simone Fornari, *La spositione sopra l’Orlando Furioso di L. Ariosto*, 2 pts. (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1549–50), cited below as *Spositione*, p. 47: “percio ché così vuole egli dare a dividedere l’invenzion sue esser sopra veritevole fermamento fondate: acciò non paia esser totalmente impudente bugia quello che egli racconta; e questo per cagion che le favole de’ romanzi sono di vanità notabilmente notate.”
- 7 Fornari, *Spositione*, p. 77: “abbracciar materia che tenga del fondamento verace... Et di qui viene, che tante volte cita Turpino Arcivescovo, il quale pienamente scrisse le chroniche delle cose di Francia.” See also p. 654.
- 8 Not infrequently Ariosto cites Turpin to authenticate a detail so precise in an otherwise totally exaggerated set of events that the procedure serves ironically to make more evident the non-verisimilitude of these events. For example, after the description of Orlando’s initial decimation of Isabella’s captors, a group of whom he slaughters by hurling an enormous banquet table at them, the narrator mentions that seven of them survived, and he refers facetiously to Turpin to authenticate this detail (*Orlando Furioso* XIII.40).
- 9 Fornari refers to these as historical *allusioni*: “While he [i.e., Ariosto] seems to be dealing with one thing, he is thinking about and considering another in the very same episode; as in the episode of Olimpia: in which Bireno could be representing Henry VIII, because both one and the other were treacherous and cruel toward the wife” [*mentre par che d’una cosa ragiona, a un’ altra nel medesimo ragionamento pensa e riguarda: come in quella d’Olimpia: Dove potrebbe Bireno propriamente la persona d’Henrico ottavo rappresentare: perché l’uno e l’altro verso la moglie fu perfido e crudele*] (*Spositione*, p. 66). He cites numerous other such historical allusions on pp. 59–69.
- 10 Fornari emphasizes the historicity of the main action of the *Furioso*, the war of Charlemagne against the Moors in Spain, and the military exploits of the chief protagonists, even though he acknowledges that these matters [*materie*] have in the past been “profaned by so many *romanzi*, by the addition of the most impudent lies and vain falsehoods, that it really seems that there is not the least bit of certainty or truth in them” [*da tanti e tanti romanzi quasi profanate con l’aggiungervi impudentissimi mendatii e falsità vane, veramente par che non vi sia una menomissima particella di certo e vero*] (*Spositione*, p. 76).
- 11 Giovan Battista Pigna, *I romanzi*, ed. Salvatore Ritrovato (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1997), pp. 24–25: “Tutto quello che della imitazione s’è dichiarato, precisamente a i Romanzi s’accommoda. Evvi questa sola differenza: che il fondamento della costoro imitazione non è con l’epico un istesso: perciocché l’epico sopra una cosa vera fonda una verisimile. E vera intendo o per istorie, o per

favole, cioè o in effetto vera, o vera sopposta. Questi altri alla verità risguardo alcuno non hanno. . ."

- 12 Even Alamanni's chivalric poem, *Girone il cortese* (1548), presents itself as a work that treats historical material. Jossa ("Da Ariosto a Tasso," 73–75) comments on how the critique against "*l'inverosimiglianza romanzesca*" bears on the turn to more historically accountable narrative poetry.
- 13 Translations of passages from Tasso's *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* are taken from Lawrence F. Rhu, *The Genesis of Tasso's Narrative Theory: English Translations of the Early Poetics and a Comparative Study of Their Significance* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), cited here and below by page numbers. For the original text, see Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico*, ed. Luigi Poma (Bari: Laterza, 1964), p. 4; later citations of the text refer to this edition.
- 14 "*par exemples du passé nous enseigne à juger du présent, e à prévoir l'advenir, à fin que nous scachions ce que nous devons suyvre ou appeter, et qu'il nous faut fuir et eviter*"; Jacques Amyot, "Aux lecteurs," in *Les Vies des Hommes Illustres de Plutarque Traduites du Grec par Amyot* (Paris: Janet et Cotellet, 1818), vol. 1, p. xxiv. See also Dionigi Atanagi, *Ragionamento de la eccellentia de la historia* (Venice: Domenico de' Nicolini, 1559), reprinted in *Theoretiker humanistischer Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Eckhard Kessler (Munich: Fink, 1971), p. 76.
- 15 History, claims Amyot, makes the appeal of its virtuous exemplars "with more weight and gravity than do poetic inventions and compositions, all the more so since history never uses anything but the naked truth; whereas poetry usually enriches the matters it praises beyond merit since its principal goal is to delight" [*avec plus de poids e plus de gravité, que ne font les inventions et compositions poétiques, d'autant qu'elle ne se sert jamais que de la nue vérité; et la poésie ordinairement enrichit les choses qu'elle loue, par dessus le merite, à cause que son but principal est de delecter*] ("Aux lecteurs," in *Les Vies*, vol. 1, p. xxvi).
- 16 See Atanagi, *Ragionamento*, in *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 68–69.
- 17 *Discorsi*, p. 17: "*quello che principalmente costituisce e determina la natura della poesia, e la fa da l'istoria differente è il considerare le cose non come sono state, ma in quella guisa che dovrebbero essere state, avendo riguardo più tosto al verisimile in universale che alla verità de' particolari, prima d'ogn' altra cosa deve il poeta avvertire se nella materia ch'egli prende a trattare, v'è avvenimento alcuno il quale, altrimenti essendo successo, o più del verisimile o più del mirabile, o per qual si voglia altra cagione, portasse maggior diletto; e tutti i successi che si fatti trovarà, cioè che meglio in un altro modo potessero essere avvenuti, senza rispetto alcuno di vero o d'istoria a sua voglia muti e rimuti, e riduca gli accidenti delle cose a quel modo ch'egli giudica migliore, co' l' vero alterato il tutto finto accompagnando.*"
- 18 Right after the passage under discussion Tasso explains why he doesn't consider Lucan a poet: "And even though I believe that Lucan is not a poet [*Lucano non esser poeta*] [in the *Pharsalia*], I am not prompted to this belief by the reason that leads others to believe so – that is, that he is not a poet because he narrates true events [*perché narra veri avvenimenti*]. This alone is not enough. He is not a poet, however, because he so binds himself to the truth of the particulars that he has no regard for universal verisimilitude [*ma poeta*

non è egli perché talmente s'obliga a la verità de' particolari che non ha rispetto al verisimile in universale]" (*Discorsi*, p. 22).

- 19 See *Discorsi*, p. 17; I have slightly altered the translation of Rhu.
- 20 *Discorsi*, p. 18: "torre a fatto a la poesia quella autorità che dall'istoria le viene: da la qual ragione mossi, concludemmo dover l'argomento dell'epico sovra qualche istoria esser fondato."
- 21 As late as 1570, Thomaso Porcacchi, the Italian translator of Dictys and Dares, still perpetuates the legend that the two provided eyewitness accounts of the Trojan War and that they were the first historians of ancient Greece in a sequence that continues with Herodotus and Thucydides and extends right up to Plutarch. See, e.g., the remarks about the concatenation of these histories on the title page of *Ditte Candiotto et Darete Frigio della guerra troiana tradotti per Thomaso Porcacchi da Castiglione Arretino* . . . (Venice: Gabriel Giolito, 1570).
- 22 For Salviati's rejection of Dares and Dictys as possible "sources" of the *Iliad*, see *Lo 'nfarinato Secondo ovvero dello 'nfarinato accademico della Crusca, risposta al libro intitolato Replica di Camillo Pellegrino ec.* . . . (Florence: A. Padovani, 1588), pp. 105–6. Already on p. 56 Salviati voices his doubts that Dares and Dictys could have written their accounts of the Trojan War before Homer and have remained unknown to Aristotle or to the ancient Greeks.
- 23 *Discorsi*, p. 22.
- 24 *Discorsi*, p. 10.
- 25 *Discorsi*, p. 7: "a Dio, a gli Angioli suoi, a' demoni o a coloro a' quali da Dio o da' demoni è concessa questa podestà, quali sono i santi, i maghi, e le fate."
- 26 Torquato Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, trans. Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 30. For the original text, see the edition in *Discorsi*, ed. Poma, p. 88: "Molto meno è vero quel che dice il Mazzoni, che la perfetissima poesia è la fantastica imitazione, perchè sì fatta imitazione è de le cose che non sono e non furono giamai; ma la perfetissima poesia imita le cose che sono, che furono o che possono essere, come fu la guerra di Troia, e l'ira d'Achille, e la pietà d'Enea, e le battaglie fra Troiani e Latini, e l'altre che furono o possono essere fatte. Ma I Centauri, l'Arpie e I Ciclopi non sono adeguato o principal subietto de la poesia, né i cavalli volanti e gli altri mostri de' quali son piene le favole di romanzi."

CHAPTER 13 ROMANCE AND HISTORY IN TASSO'S GERUSALEMME LIBERATA

- 1 Paolo Beni, *In Aristotelis Poeticam commentarii* (Padua, 1613), pp. 80–81.
- 2 Torquato Tasso, *Prose*, ed. Ettore Mazzali (Milan: Ricciardi, 1959), p. 374: "Aggiungo che da la moltitudine delle favole nasce l'indeterminazione; e può questo progresso andare in infinito, senza che le sia da l'arte prefisso o circoscritto termine alcuno." Subsequent quotations are from this edition and cited as *Prose* with page numbers.
- 3 *Prose*, pp. 375–79.
- 4 See the *Considerazioni al Tasso* in Galileo Galilei, *Scritti letterari*, ed. Alberto Chiari (Florence: Le Monnier, 1970), pp. 488–635; M. A. Reynolds, "The

- Considerazioni al Tasso* of Galileo Galilei,” *Italian Quarterly*, 80 (1980), 11–28. Marc Fumaroli gives an account of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns that is sympathetic to Boileau and not to Louis in his long introduction to *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, ed. Anne-Marie Lecoq (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).
- 5 *Prose*, pp. 351–53.
 - 6 *Prose*, pp. 356–58.
 - 7 *Prose*, pp. 363–64.
 - 8 *Prose*, p. 366: “Ma però che quello che principalmente costituisce e determina la natura della poesia e la fa da l’istoria differente è il considerar le cose non come sono state, ma in quella guisa che dovrebbero essere state, avendo riguardo più tosto al verisimile in universale che a la verità de’ particolari, prima d’ogn’altra cosa deve il poeta avvertire se nella materia, ch’egli prende a trattare, v’è avvenimento alcuno il quale, altrimenti essendo successo, o più del verisimile o più del mirabile, o per qual si voglia altra cagione, portasse maggior diletto. . .”
 - 9 For further commentary on this passage, see [Chapter 12](#) of this volume. The confluence of Horace’s *Ars poetica* and Aristotle’s *Poetics* in the poetic theory of the *cinquecento* is the great theme of Bernard Weinberg’s study, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1961). The theorist identified above all with poetic pleasure is Lodovico Castelvetro, whose *Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta* appeared in 1570; Castelvetro’s influence is clear, even when Tasso argues with the theorist, in his recasting of the *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* into the *Discorsi del poema eroico*, published in 1594. There one reads that “the heroic poem is an imitation of a famous, great, and perfect event, narrated with the highest verse, to the end of instructing with pleasure, that is to the end that pleasure be the reason that he who reads should more willingly not exclude instruction” (*Prose*, p. 504). But here in the earlier *Discorsi* Tasso makes Horatian *diletto*, apparently unlinked to the *utile* or “instruction,” the criterion for poetic supplements to history, and he goes on to say, “I concede that which I truly believe and which others would deny; that is, that pleasure [*diletto*] is the goal of poetry” (*Prose*, p. 385).
 - 10 Michael Murrin, *History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 103–19.
 - 11 The Ennius source has not been noted by modern editors. It is indicated and discussed by Malatesta Porta in his 1589 dialogue, *Il Rossi* (see Weinberg, *History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 11, pp. 1045–48), one of the many documents in the debate over the relative merits of Ariosto and Tasso. See the *Opere di Torquato Tasso colle controversie sulla Gerusalemme*, ed. Giovanni Rosini, 33 vols. (Pisa: Niccolò Capurro, 1821–32), vol. xx, pp. 109–10. For references to the *Gerusalemme Liberata* here and later in this chapter, see Torquato Tasso, *Opere*, ed. Bruno Maier, 5 vols. (Milan: Rizzoli, 1963–65), vol. 111, *Gerusalemme liberata*.
 - 12 *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, ed. C. T. Forster and F. H. B. Daniel, 2 vols. (London: C. K. Paul, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 221–22. See also *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554–1562*, trans. Edward Seymour Forster (Oxford University Press,

- 1927), pp. 120–21, 163–66; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper, 1973), 2 vols., vol. II, pp. 1166–73; *The New Cambridge Modern History, Volume III: The Counter-Reformation and Price Revolution 1559–1610*, ed. R. B. Wernham (Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 355–60.
- 13 Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), pp. 207–18.
- 14 The second golden *verga* is probably related to the Golden Bough – *virga* (*Aeneid* 6.144, 6.409) – of Virgil’s underworld episode as well as to the Mosaic wand (14.33.7; see Exodus 7:8f.) of the Magus of Ascalon, who has given this golden wand to the crusaders of Canto 15. The Virgilian model would reinforce the persistent allusions and symbolism that identify Armida’s island as a place of death; see Giovanni Falaschi, *La favola di Rinaldo: il codice fiabesco e la “Gerusalemme liberata”* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994). Antonio La Penna notes the modeling of Tasso’s Argillano on Thersites, though he does not mention the golden scepter/wand of Goffredo, in *Tersite censurato e altri studi di letteratura fra antico e moderno* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1991), p. 146.
- 15 *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. II, p. 2323.
- 16 *Prose*, pp. 385–86.
- 17 *Prose*, p. 388.
- 18 Sergio Zatti, *L’uniforme cristiano e il multiforme pagano: Saggio sulla “Gerusalemme liberata”* (Milan: Saggiatore, 1983); Robert Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
- 19 *Prose*, p. 386: “la varietà è lodevole sino a quel termine che non passi in confusione.”
- 20 See Charles Ross, “Angelica and the Fata Morgana: Boiardo’s Allegory of Love,” *Modern Language Notes*, 96 (1980), 12–22; David Quint, “The Figure of Atlante: Ariosto and Boiardo’s Poem,” *Modern Language Notes*, 94 (1979), 77–91, and “The Fortunes of Morgana: From Boiardo to Marino,” in *Fortune and Romance: Boiardo in America*, ed. Jo Ann Cavallo and Charles Ross (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), pp. 17–29; James Nohrnberg, “Orlando’s Opportunity: Chance, Luck, Fortune, Occasion, Boats, and Blows in Boiardo’s *Orlando Innamorato*,” in *Fortune and Romance*, ed. Cavallo and Ross, pp. 31–75. In what follows, I take up again issues that I have treated in “Tasso, Milton, and the Boat of Romance,” [chapter 6](#) of *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 248–67.
- 21 Albert Russell Ascoli, *Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 264–71, points out how Ariosto analogously uses geographical distance to indicate a step away from the “real” world of the *Orlando Furioso* into the marvelous and allegorical, in the episodes of Alcina’s island (*OF* 6–10) and the moon (*OF* 34–35), both of which lie behind the fiction of Cantos 14–16 of the *Liberata*.
- 22 In the second book of the *Discorsi del poema eroico*, Tasso would later single out flying horses as a typical romance marvel, depreciating such fantastic

- imitation. Daniel Javitch cites the passage at the end of his essay in this volume (Chapter 12). The divergence of my argument from Javitch's is partly a matter of emphasis, but I also would see an evolution and rigidifying of Tasso's attitude towards romance in the last two decades of his life. The *Liberata*, as we shall see, both allows Armida her flying chariot and brings the chariot back into the realm of the historically possible: that is, the poem includes romance fantasy but aims to subordinate it to epic history. Tasso's revised epic, the *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, published in 1593, a year before the *Discorsi del poema eroico*, eliminates the chariot entirely. Armida's garden is now set in Lebanon, and there is no need either for her winged chariot or for the allegorical ship of Fortune to reach it: both of these fictional inventions of the *Liberata* disappear. And in the *Conquistata*, as is well known, there is no reconciliation of Armida with the hero, now named Riccardo: after her garden is destroyed she leaves the poem in chains as an irredeemable siren of Babylon; see Melinda Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress, Tasso's Captive Woman," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 523–52, and Matteo Residori, *L'Idea del poema: Studio sulla "Gerusalemme conquistata" di Torquato Tasso*, Testi e saggi rinascimentali, 3 (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2004), pp. 367–421.
- 23 Note also the repetition of the rhyme words *volo* and *polo* in the stanzas that describe Columbus's ship sailing out beyond the Pillars of Hercules (15.32) and Armida's chariot flying back in through them (16.71). For the role of Columbus and the romance sea journey in Canto 15, see two studies of Matteo Residori, "Colombo e il volo di Ulisse: una nota sul XV della *Liberata*," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, ser. 3, 22 (1992), 931–42, and "Il Mago d'Ascalona e gli spazi del romanzo nella *Liberata*," *Italianistica*, 24 (1995), 453–71.
 24. *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (1967; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
 - 25 Fernando Colombo, *Storie del Nuovo Mondo* (Genoa: Dioscuri, 1989), p. 23. The Spanish original of this work is now lost; it is known through its Italian translation, first published in 1571. In the *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, Tasso eliminates the allegorical figure of Fortune from the episode and transfers the dove simile to Armida herself (13.21), thus confirming in retrospect the mirroring relationship already in place in the *Liberata* between this Christianized Fortune and Armida, who plays the role of a traditional, secular fortune.
 - 26 However willfully hostile, Galileo's considerations have a point: "But Signor Tasso, I wish that even you knew that poetic fables and fictions should serve the allegorical meaning in a way that there does not appear in them the least hint of an imposition: otherwise it will appear labored, forced, dragged in, extravagant. . ." *Considerazioni al Tasso*, ed. Chiari, p. 604: "Ma, Signor Tasso, vorrei pur che voi sapessi che le favole e le finzioni poetiche devono servire in maniera al senso allegorico, che in esse non apparisca una minima ombra d'obbligo: altrimenti si darà nello stentato, nel sforzato, nello stiracchiato, e nello spropositato. . ."
 - 27 When Armida visits the crusader camp in Canto 4, she plays the role of Lucan's Cleopatra who seduces Caesar with her feigned grief (compare 4.77

- and *De bello civili* 10.82); the sculpted gates of her palace in Canto 16.3–4 depict Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Armida's confrontation with the departing Rinaldo in the same canto is evidently modeled on Dido's pleas to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4; see especially 16.57–59.
- 28 Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," relates the motif of the handmaid to Jerome's gloss on the captive slave woman of Deuteronomy 21:10–13, which justifies the use of pagan letters, suitably chastened, for Christian purposes. The motif allows Tasso to defend the beauties of poetry itself – here, in the person of Armida, strongly identified with romance – in his epic.
 - 29 Riccardo Brusagli, "Il campo cristiano nella *Liberata*," in his *Stagioni della civiltà estense* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1983), pp. 187–222.
 - 30 Lionardo Salvati, *Degli Accademici della Crusca difesa dell'Ariosto contra l dialogo dell'epica poesia di Cammillo Pellegrino*, in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*, vol. XVIII, p. 260.
 - 31 The chaste pity here echoes Rinaldo's sudden change of attitude in 16.52. See Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," pp. 545–46. Gough cites in the appendix to her essay, p. 550, a letter of Tasso's of April 24, 1576 to Scipione Gonzaga, Letter 44 of the *Lettere poetiche* that were published along with the *Liberata* in early editions of the poem, in which Tasso says that none of the love stories of the poem ends happily.
 - 32 Ulrich Leo, *Angelica ed i "migliori plettri": Appunti allo stile della Controriforma* (Krefeld: Scherpe, 1953); Riccardo Brusagli, "Medoro riconosciuto," in *Studi cavallereschi* (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 2003), pp. 75–101, discusses how sequels and rewritings of Ariosto's fiction attempted to deal with the scandal of Angelica's choosing the lowborn Medoro for her consort. For the quotation from *Orlando Furioso*, see Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. Emilio Bigi, 2 vols. (Milan: Rusconi, 1982).
 - 33 Antonio Belloni, *Il poema epico e mitologico* (Milan: Vallardi, [1912]), pp. 260–63; *Gli epigoni della "Gerusalemme liberata"* (Padua: Draghi, 1893), pp. 81–87.
 - 34 I cite a later edition: *Il Goffredo ovvero Gierusalemme Liberata Poema Heroico del Torquato Tasso... Et anco i Cinque Canti del Signor Camillo Camilli* (Venice, 1588).
 - 35 Tasso, *Lettere poetiche*, ed. Carla Molinari ([Milan]: Fondazione Pietro Bembo, and Parma: U. Guanda, 1995), pp. 169–70, 174–75, 393, 424–25; the passages are cited and translated in the appendix of Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," pp. 549–50.

CHAPTER 14 THE THINKING OF HISTORY IN SPENSERIAN ROMANCE

- 1 The great nineteenth-century historian, Leopold von Ranke, who famously said that the goal of the historian should be to understand "how it actually was at the time," developed positivist historiography in reaction to the domination of historical studies in the German-speaking universities by the followers of Hegel. See Timothy Bahti, *Allegories of History: Literary Historiography after*

- Hegel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). The high points of the debate in modern historiography appear in the work of the Marxist historian, Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961), on the side of Hegel against von Ranke, and the Tudor historian, Geoffrey Elton, defender of “empiricist and non-ideological history.” See Geoffrey Roberts, “Geoffrey Elton and the Philosophy of History,” *The Historian*, 57 (1998), 29–31, citing a phrase from a review by Elton in *The Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 761–64; see also Roberts, “Postmodernism versus the Standpoint of Action,” *History and Theory*, 36 (1997), 249–60, and Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History?” From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995). For the argument, based on Northrop Frye’s analysis of fictional narrative modes, that historical narrative follows the general rules of such modes, including romance, see Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). Also of interest is White’s *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), especially chapters 3–5: “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”; “Historicism, History, and the Figurative Imagination”; and “The Fictions of Factual Representation.” See also the essays in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2006), in particular Kewes’s “History and Its Uses” and Blair Worden’s “Historians and Poets.”
- 2 See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 83 of the 1970 edition (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), cited and discussed in Ian Balfour, “Reversal, Quotation (Benjamin’s History),” *MLN*, 106 (1991), 622–23 [622–47]. For the passage at large, see Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1991), pp. 60–61.
 - 3 Cited and discussed in Bahti, *Allegories of History*, p. 69.
 - 4 See Michel Henry, *De la phénoménologie*, vol. 1 of *Phénoménologie de la vie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 60 and 62; Simon Jarvis, “What is Speculative Thinking?” *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 227 (2004), 72 [69–83]; and Brenda Machosky, *Structures of Appearing: Allegory and the Work of Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).
 - 5 Jon Whitman, “Thinking Backward and Forward: Narrative Order and the Beginnings of Romance,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 4 (2006), 131–35 [131–50].
 - 6 *The Faerie Queene* was published in quarto installments in 1590 (books I to III) and 1596 (books IV to VI). In the first folio edition of the poem, published in 1609, ten years after the poet’s death, two cantos and two stanzas of a seventh book were added; these are known as “The Mutabilitie Cantos.” An account of the planned design of the poem at large, Spenser’s “Letter to Raleigh,” was published with the first quarto installment in 1590. Citations are from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, rev. 2nd edn., text edited by Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007).

- 7 On some of the diverse ways in which Spenser approaches the past in *The Faerie Queene* and other writings, see, for example, Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 8 G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 3rd edn. (1991; rpt. London: Folio, 1997), pp. 298–301. I have relied more broadly on Elton's invaluable account of the eighteen years of war at the end of Elizabeth's reign, and of events leading up to it.
- 9 On epic and romance, see [Chapters 9, 12, and 13](#) of this volume; on genealogies and policies, see [Chapters 5 and 10](#).
- 10 See David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton University Press, 1993); compare his essay in [Chapter 13](#) of this volume.
- 11 Compare the overlapping yet differing images of tombs discussed in [Chapters 2 and 4](#) of this study.
- 12 See Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 13 *Aeneid* 2.290. Cf. *Iliad* 13.772–73.
- 14 "A Letter of the Authors . . .," in *The Faerie Queene*, p. 715.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 716.

CHAPTER 15 LA CAVA: ROMANCE AND HISTORY IN CORRAL AND CERVANTES

- 1 Parts of this essay draw upon and adapt material in my article "Iconicity, Romance and History in the *Crónica Sarracina*," *diacritics*, 36:3 (2006), 119–30, © 2008 The Johns Hopkins University Press, and in my chapter "The Possibility of Historical Time in the *Crónica Sarracina*," in *Rethinking the New Medievalism*, ed. R. Howard Bloch, Alison Calhoun, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, Joachim Küpper, and Jeanette Patterson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 100–14, © 2014 The Johns Hopkins University Press. I am grateful to The Johns Hopkins University Press for permission to reprint passages from those works, aspects of which are developed in this essay.
- 2 See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).
- 3 Stephen Gilman, "Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Amadís de Gaula," in *Studia Philologica: Homenaje ofrecido a Dámaso Alonso*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Gredos, 1960–63), vol. II, pp. 99–114.
- 4 See in this context Alan Deyermond, "The Death and Rebirth of Visigothic Spain in the *Estoria de España*," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 9 (1985), 355 [345–67].
- 5 See especially [Chapters 2–3, 5–6, 9–10, and 13](#).
- 6 In this regard, see James Donald Fogelquist's illuminating *Pedro de Corral's Reconfiguration of La Cava in the "Crónica del Rey Don Rodrigo"*, Monographs in Humanities, 3 (n.p.: eHumanista, 2007), and Patricia E. Grieve, *The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
- 7 No Arabic manuscript of the tenth-century *Crónica del moro Rasis* has survived, nor has the original Portuguese translation. Interestingly, in the three

surviving manuscripts used by Diego Catalán in his Castilian reconstruction of the *Crónica del moro Rasis*, the narrative of the conquest of Spain by the Muslims and the account of the emirate of Al-Andalus contained in al-Rāzī's original are replaced by Corral's account of Rodrigo's reign along with material based on the Portuguese translation of Gil Pérez. See Pedro de Corral, *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo (Crónica sarracina)*, ed. James Donald Fogelquist, 2 vols. (Madrid: Castalia, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 12–13; citations of the text below refer to this edition.

- 8 Villena takes the *Crónica* very seriously as a text worthy of great respect – including it in his “Epístola a Suero de Quiñones” as a reliable meteorological source while valuing Virgil's *Aeneid* and Guido della Colonna's *Estoria troyana*. See Enrique de Villena, *Obras completas*, ed. Pedro M. Cátedra, 3 vols. (Madrid: Turner, 1994–2000), vol. 1, pp. 347–48.
- 9 Pérez de Guzmán's blatant disapproval of Corral's work was clearly influenced by political events and alliances. When Corral allied himself with Alvaro de Luna soon after pledging allegiance to the King of Aragón he incurred the hatred of Pérez de Guzmán, who was imprisoned in 1432 as a result of his Aragonese affiliations.
- 10 Even today, some readers hold to the assessment of Menéndez Pidal that “Corral's imagination is so fixated on chivalric romance that he does not pay attention to anything else” (Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Floresta de leyendas heroicas españolas: Rodrigo, el último godo*, 3 vols. [1925–27; rpt. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958], vol. 1, p. clxiii). See in this context Gloria Alvarez-Hesse, *La “Crónica sarracina”: Estudio de los elementos novelescos y caballerescos* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).
- 11 As Inés Cramer notes: “Menéndez Pidal believes that the legend of Rodrigo is an epic narrative . . . but in Corral's version there are other elements that ally it to other genres. Among them are the heteroglot discourses, frequently associated with the novel, by contrast with the monoglot discourse of epic” (Inés de la Flor Cramer, *Los grupos políticos y sociales en la “Crónica sarracina”* [New York: Peter Lang, 2005], p. 4).
- 12 Madeleine Pardo, “Pelayo et la fille du marchand: Réflexions sur la *Crónica sarracina*,” *Atalaya*, 4 (1993), 59 [9–59].
- 13 As Michael Agnew explains, “The reader is simultaneously confronted with a surplus and an absence: on the one hand, the multiple invented authorial voices which appear to vouchsafe the truthfulness of the narrative; on the other, the ‘real’ editor himself, who remains unnamed in the surviving manuscripts or printed versions of the work, represented only as the editorial voice which intervenes *occasionally* (as when he informs the reader at one point that the history of the reign of King Rodrigo resurfaced in the hands of a merchant)” (Michael S. Agnew, “Crafting Past and Present: The Figure of the Historian in 15th-Century Castile,” PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania [2000], p. 51). He is an implied editor at that. The only association of Pedro del Corral with the *Crónica* comes in Pérez de Guzmán's assessment of him as “a frivolous and vain man named Pedro de Corral” [*un liviano e presuntuoso onbre llamado Pedro de Corral*] (Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *Generaciones y semblanzas*, ed. R. B. Tate [London: Tamesis, 1965], p. 1).

- 14 Compare the comments early in [Chapter 3](#) on the treatment of time in the thirteenth-century French *Faits des Romains*. On interior timing in late medieval and early modern romance see the discussion in [Chapter 11](#).
- 15 Agnew offers an interesting discussion of the treatment of time-references (“Crafting Past and Present,” pp. 230–37), remarking that “in more than 200 double-column folios, Corral mentions only three precise dates, one of them glaringly incorrect” (p. 233).
- 16 See Pardo’s incisive discussion in “Pelayo et la fille du marchand.”
- 17 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 82.
- 18 Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 39.
- 19 Compare the discussion in [Chapter 14](#) on temporal negotiations in the later work of Spenser.
- 20 Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 55. For a discussion of the events leading to the defeat of Visigothic Spain, see Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409–711* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
- 21 For a discussion of anti-Semitism, see David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 22 Cramer, *Los grupos políticos*, p. 111.
- 23 See Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), especially the chapter entitled “The Secret Tower,” pp. 15–32.
- 24 Compare the comments in [Chapter 8](#) about romance and conditions in fifteenth-century England.
- 25 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 31.
- 26 See, for example, the mistaken reference to Uchali Fartax’s death, which occurred not in 1581 (as the narrator alleges) but in 1587; the assertion that Mahomet was the son (rather than the grandson) of Barbarossa; and the fact that Pedro de Aguilar is a fiction, despite his presentation as historically real. See, on such issues, the usefully annotated edition of the *Quijote* (especially the “Captive’s Tale”) directed by Francisco Rico: Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Barcelona: Instituto Cervantes, 1998).
- 27 Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Martín de Riquer (Barcelona: Juventud, [1968]), p. 407. Quotations from the text refer to this edition. Translations refer to the translation by Edith Grossman, *Don Quixote* (New York: Ecco, 2003); for this passage, see p. 345.
- 28 On the eroticism of female hands in the period, see Agustín Redondo, *Otra manera de leer el “Quijote”: historia, tradiciones culturales y literatura* (Madrid: Castalia, 1977), pp. 166–68.
- 29 Jaime Oliver Asín, “La hija de Agi Morato en la obra de Cervantes,” *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 27 (1947–48), 254 [245–339].
- 30 Asín, “La hija,” 259.

- 31 Karl-Ludwig Selig notes the reiterated *en un lugar* references, ending his insightful enumeration with the following remark: “It may perhaps be even suggested that this almost magic formulaic phrase – a device of the art of telling a story – has also some relevance and implications in trying to explore one of the central and critical problems of the book at large, that of ‘true history’” (“Cervantes: ‘En un lugar de . . .,’” *MLN*, 86 [1971], 268 [266–68]).

CHAPTER 16 AFTERWORD AND AFTERWARD: ROMANCE, HISTORY, TIME

- 1 See William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium,” in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, definitive edn. (1956; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 191–92.
- 2 In the annotation below I cite only a small selection of the critical studies relating to the specific topics under discussion. There is no attempt in this brief chapter to offer an overview of the expansive range of research on the subject at large.
- 3 For an overview, see, e.g., Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford University Press, 1992), especially pp. 37–96. For some perspectives on the development of the Troilus story at large, see *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. Piero Boitani (Oxford University Press, 1989). An influential early discussion of Chaucer’s “historicization” of Boccaccio’s poem is C. S. Lewis, “What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*,” *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 17 (1932), 56–75; rpt. in *Chaucer’s “Troilus”: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Stephen A. Barney (Hamden, CT: Shoe String, 1980), pp. 37–54.
- 4 See, e.g., John P. McCall, “The Trojan Scene in Chaucer’s ‘Troilus,’” *ELH*, 29 (1962), 263–75; rpt. in *Chaucer’s “Troilus,”* pp. 101–13.
- 5 See *Troilus and Criseyde*, IV.953–1082 and V.1051–71 (with the explanatory note to V.1054–85 on the precedent in the *Roman de Troie*), in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (1987; rpt. Oxford University Press, 1991); later citations of the poem refer to this edition.
- 6 Important early explorations of such issues appear in Morton W. Bloomfield, “Distance and Predestination in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 72 (1957), 14–26 (rpt. in *Chaucer’s “Troilus,”* pp. 75–89); E. Talbot Donaldson, “Criseyde and Her Narrator,” in *Speaking of Chaucer* (London: Athlone, 1970), pp. 65–83; and Donaldson, “The Ending of Chaucer’s *Troilus*,” in *Early English and Norse Studies, Presented to Hugh Smith in Honour of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote (London: Methuen, 1963), pp. 26–45 (rpt. as “The Ending of ‘Troilus’” in *Speaking of Chaucer*, pp. 84–101).
- 7 See *Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1645.
- 8 See *Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1849–55; compare Donaldson, “Ending,” p. 99.
- 9 See *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson, *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (2003; rpt. Cambridge University Press, 2009), with the

- comments and notes in the editorial introduction, pp. 1–66. For the first quotation, see the play's "Prologue," line 1 (with the present-tense emphasis in lines 7, 10–15, 19–31); compare, e.g., the comments in III.iii.145–84 on "Time" and the devouring of "good deeds past" as "fast as they are made"; for the second quotation, see III.ii.178–82 (with lines 151–76); for the third quotation, see v.ii.145.
- 10 For some of the complications in associating Chrétien's work with "timelessness," see, e.g., my comments near the end of [Chapter 1](#) and near the end of this chapter, along with my discussion in "Thinking Backward and Forward: Narrative Order and the Beginnings of Romance," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 4 (2006), 134–40 [131–50], and the studies cited in my essay "Alternative Scriptures: Story, History, and the Canons of Romance," *New Medieval Literatures*, 8 (2006), 7, n. 18 [1–44].
 - 11 On these developments see the comments and studies cited in "Alternative Scriptures" and in Jon Whitman, "Transfers of Empire, Movements of Mind: Holy Sepulchre and Holy Grail," *MLN*, 123 (2008), 895–923. On the genealogical illustration in "Alternative Scriptures," 20, see the earlier diagrams cited in the caption on that page, with the note in "Transfers of Empire," 912, n. 63.
 - 12 See the detailed discussion in Whitman, "Transfers of Empire."
 - 13 See "Envisioning the End: History and Consciousness in Medieval English Arthurian Romance," *Arthuriana*, 23 (2013), 79–103.
 - 14 On Spenser "thinking through history" in *The Faerie Queene*, see [Chapter 14](#).
 - 15 See Alfred Tennyson, "The Passing of Arthur" (lines 1–5), from *Idylls of the King*, in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn., 3 vols. (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1987), vol. III, p. 548 [547–61].
 - 16 See Marco Praloran, *Tempo e azione nell'Orlando Furioso*, "Biblioteca di 'Lettere Italiane,'" Studi e Testi, 54 (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1999), pp. 11–12, with his broader discussion, pp. 1–55, and Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* XIII, 44, and XXIII, 53. My comments in this paragraph draw upon my essay "Thinking Backward and Forward," 133–34.
 - 17 See Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of "Orlando Furioso"* (Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 91 and 98, with his broader discussion, pp. 86–105.
 - 18 For some views of the dialogue (*Don Quixote* 1, 47–50) in relation to Tasso and Ariosto, see, e.g., Alban K. Forcione, *Cervantes, Aristotle, and the "Persiles"* (Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 91–130, and Julia Farmer, "Disenchanted Castles: Cervantes' Representation of the Ariostan Epic-Romance Split," *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 29 (2009), pp. 159–72.
 - 19 See, e.g., the comparative study "*Romantic*" and *Its Cognates: The European History of a Word*, ed. Hans Eichner (University of Toronto Press, 1972), including the introduction by Eichner, pp. 4–5 [3–16], and Raymond Immerwahr, "'Romantic' and Its Cognates in England, Germany, and France before 1790," pp. 18–21 [17–97].

- 20 It should be stressed that there is conspicuous fluidity during this period in the use of the terms “romance” and “novel” themselves; see, e.g., Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (1964; rpt. London: University of London, Athlone, 1965), pp. 234–37, and *Novel and Romance, 1700 – 1800: A Documentary Record*, ed. Ioan Williams (London: Routledge, 1970).
- 21 For some case studies, see, e.g., the valuable collection *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture, 27 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).
- 22 A basic early survey is Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*.
- 23 See Immerwahr, “Romantic,” in “*Romantic*” and *Its Cognates*, p. 28.
- 24 David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 7 (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 11–12; Scott’s essay was published in 1824.
- 25 Though much of the transformation briefly noted in this paragraph has been extensively examined in modern scholarship, a useful survey of relations with the terminology of the “romantic” remains “*Romantic*” and *Its Cognates*. For German developments, see Hans Eichner’s essay “Germany / Romantisch–Romantik–Romantiker,” pp. 98–156 of the volume, which includes the quotations (cited above) from Schlegel (pp. 112–14, with remarks on complications in the pronouncement) and Novalis (pp. 124–25).
- 26 The citations come from the originally published version (1809) of a set of lines included with variant readings in *The Prelude*. For the quotation (including “Enchanter”) and a discussion of the lines, see Duff, *Romance and Revolution*, pp. 44–53.
- 27 See, e.g., the influential early studies of M. H. Abrams, “English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age,” in *Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 26–72, rpt. in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 91–119, and Harold Bloom, “The Internalization of Quest Romance,” *The Yale Review*, 58 (1969), 526–36, rpt. with adaptations in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, pp. 3–24.
- 28 See, e.g., the brief selection of views about Browning’s much-discussed poem in *Robert Browning*, ed. Harold Bloom, Bloom’s Major Poets (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2001), pp. 44–59.
- 29 For some approaches to adaptations of romance beyond the early modern period to the twenty-first century, with special attention to developments in English, see, e.g., *A Companion to Romance*, ed. Saunders, and a substantial number of chapters in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- 30 For the temporal coordination of these episodes (including the rescue of Lunete, who is crucial to Yvain’s history in the romance), see Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion (Yvain)*, ed. Mario Roques, vol. iv of *Les romans*

de Chrétien de Troyes, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age [89] (Paris: Champion, 1960), lines 3766–4628; trans. David Staines, *The Knight with the Lion*, in *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (1990; rpt. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 302–12 [257–338]; and the comments of Robert W. Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 151–57, 208–13. Compare my references to *Yvain* at the beginning and end of [Chapter 1](#). Even the interiorizing, “self-referential” episode in the romance when Yvain encounters a figure reading a “romance” [*romans*; line 5360] is deeply complicated by contexts such as the implicit association of the silken cloth in the reading scene with the disquieting conditions in which silken cloths are produced; see *Yvain*, lines 5179–390; trans. Staines, pp. 318–21.

Select bibliography

The critical literature on relations between romance and history from the medieval to the early modern period is now extensive. The literature on still broader subjects – for example, conceptions of romance at large, or attitudes toward history, or approaches to time – is vast. The following list indicates only a limited number of the works related to the subject of this volume; individual chapters call attention to a large number of additional works. The list itself includes only book-length studies; it cites mainly scholarship in recent decades; it focuses (with some exceptions) on works that explore the historical or temporal features of literary texts explicitly treated in this volume; and it omits individual editions of those texts, among them editions with detailed critical material. It is designed to offer not an overview of research about romance and history but a selection of useful reference points, with a special emphasis on the particular discussions in this book.

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